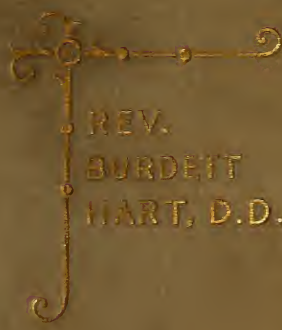


ASPECTS OF
HEAVEN



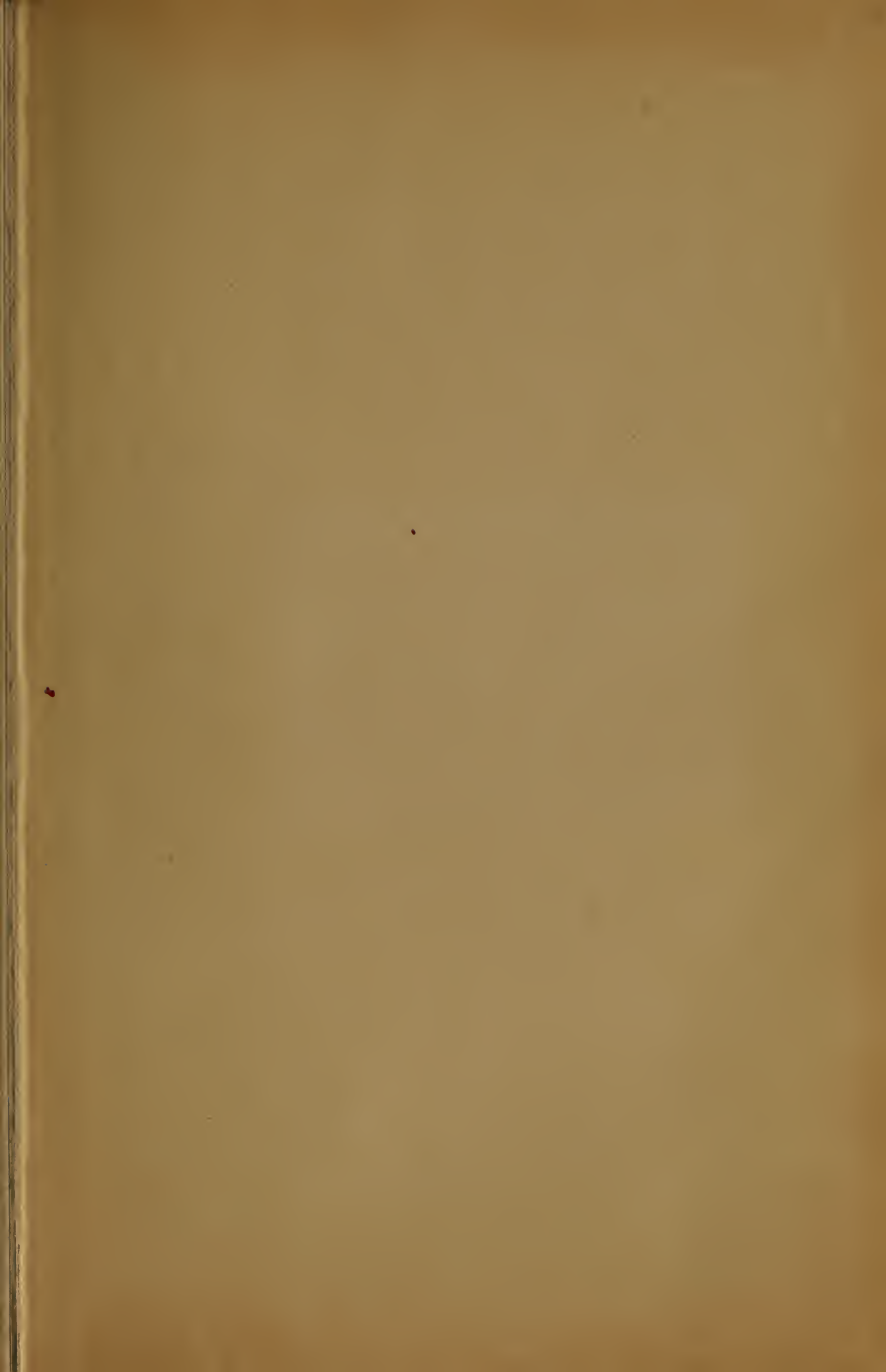
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ASPECTS OF HEAVEN.

"In thy presence is fulness of joy : at thy right hand there are pleasures
for evermore."

BY

REV. BURDETT HART, D. D.

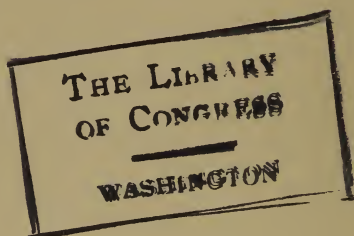


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ASPECTS OF HEAVEN.

I.

THE FATHER'S HOUSE.

ATTRACTION is put on heaven as the Father's House in which are many abiding-places for his children. He who created the heaven and the things that are therein had infinite resources at his disposal, and he lavished them with opulent prodigality upon the blessed mansions; so that in our human speech the City of God is of surpassing glory: flaming from its foundations with the splendor of costliest gems; radiant with twelve gates of pearl, each one of which is of one pearl; paved in its streets with pure gold gleaming like transparent glass; while

over all is a brilliant light which is the glory of God himself. It is the Father's House, fitted for an imperial abode, to whose glowing walls and magnificent apartments his children shall ever look with longing, and toward which through all experiences they shall hasten with most loving anticipation. As in old lands we are taken to castles and palaces and chateaux on which the wealth and taste of noble and princely families have been expended, to secure and furnish a home which should be to them the most attractive place in all the region where they dwell, so here we are pointed to a royal habitation which is adorned as a bride for her husband, where harmonious music indicates perpetual festival, and where everlasting joy is upon every head and sorrow and mourning are in eternal exile.

Wolsey, in the pride and power of his exceptional position, built a palace with such

lavish expenditure that it rivaled and surpassed any of the royal residences, so that the eye of the king looked on it with envy, whereupon the haughty cardinal gave it as a present to the jealous monarch. But eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. The King has prepared for his children a city to which they can look with gratefulness and aspiration.

This foresight of the Father's House has an influence to lift up the mind, to purify the affections, to give a sober value and importance to a life that is to be graduated into such a sphere of light and privilege.

Mr. Hamerton in his *Notes of Rural Life in France*, speaking of the effect of great houses on the mind, quotes from Stuart Mill as saying, "Nothing contributes more to nourish elevation of sentiments in a people

than the large and free character of their habitations." He adds, "Mr. Mill thought that his visits to Ford Abbey were an important circumstance in his education." He says: "The middle-age architecture, the baronial hall and the spacious and lofty rooms of this fine old place gave the sentiment of a larger and freer existence, and were to me a sort of poetic cultivation, aided also by the character of the grounds in which the Abbey stood."

Mr. Hamerton, writing from among the great old chateaux of France, goes on to say: "There cannot be a doubt that the position of Lamartine and Chateaubriand, as descendants of old noble families which had not yet parted with their great ancestral residences during the youth of those writers, was a most important circumstance in their education, and gave both of them a certain grandeur in their way of estimating things, which

pervaded their writings and remained to the end, most strongly opposed to the small-minded *bourgeois* spirit. From the autobiographical records which Lamartine and Chateaubriand have left of themselves it is quite evident that the poetry of the ancestral houses was strongly felt by them even in their youth, and remained as an influence to the end."

This influence which comes from the past, from the memory of the illustrious and grand homes in which childhood and youth have been spent, and which gives a certain breadth and grandeur to all views of life and affairs, may find a parallel in the influence which comes from the future; from the imagination of a residence prepared for us where everything will be on a regal scale of splendor, and where that regality is of God who is revealed as a Father. Those to whom it was not given to be born in grand old homes, and whose life here is spent in humble and

narrow habitations, may yet have their views broadened and their hearts expanded by dwelling in thought on the sure fact of the future, that when the earthly house of their tabernacle shall be dissolved they shall have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. It is made known to us now in the ornate descriptions of Scripture that we may be lifted up by the anticipation of it, that we may not grovel—we who are so soon to dwell in the Father's House, where many mansions are.

This house is depicted to us as created by God himself and furnished by him to be his own dwelling-place. It is not strange, therefore, that such highly-wrought pictorial representations are made of it, and that, even then, it is known to surpass all limits of language.

What idea can we form of the throne of God? What idea have we of the glory of

God which lightens it? What idea have we of a city which is pure gold, and whose foundations are made of precious gems; which is immeasurable and high and holy?

We can, perhaps, more readily estimate heaven in those negative aspects in which it is presented to us than in those which are more positive. We can understand that into this holy house there shall be no admittance for that foul list of what St. Paul calls "the works of the flesh," and that they who practise such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. We can understand, or as the apostle says "know of a surety," that no one of certain characters whom he describes "hath any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and God." We can understand that the inhabitants there shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike on them nor any heat; that death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor

crying, nor pain any more; there shall be no curse any more, and there shall be night no more. We can exclude all these from that home of life and light and purity and glory. We can banish, in our thought, from that world those things that we would like to see banished from this world and which we are trying to banish from it. We readily shut those gates of pearl against pollution, sin and crime. We see the spears of angels pointed against all evil-doers. Those adamantine walls of glory cannot be scaled by sinners. The things that annoy us, that hinder our upward progress, that injure our feelings and embitter our life, we can easily exclude from the home we hope to enjoy.

But heaven is not negative: it is decidedly positive. It is a positive and certain *place*. Many have vague and shadowy ideas of it, as though it were of dream-land: an unreal, imaginary, diffused affair. But the Father's

House is not anywhere, nor nowhere : it is somewhere. " I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also."

It is the place *into which Christ has gone*. " For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us." This place which received him when he ascended, and into which he entered for us as a forerunner, is the place into which he will admit his followers, and in respect to which he prayed, " Father, I desire that, where I am, they also may be with me." It is there that he is " on the right hand of God, having gone into heaven ; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." The " principalities and powers in heavenly places " are before his throne. We cannot

now locate that place. Christ ascended from the earth into the blue vault above: we look upward, with his disciples, along the path on which he went, but our lenses cannot locate or define it. In that unknown, invisible realm where pure glory shines, there is the Father's House.

Then, it is a *Home*. The father's house is always the home of the children. In heaven our Father is. We cannot see him yet. Our eyes, made for this world, could not look on him. But the promise to them who are saved is, they shall see God and be with Christ. Though now we see him not, yet we believe in him and anticipate the coming and glorious vision. There the believing and obedient are gathered. They have been assembling there since the world was young, since the first man entered heaven, from all churches, from all lands. Those who go now are represented as joining the company who

have gone on before, as sitting down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. It is a home scene. There is a common table where they partake together.

It is a place of *blessed reunions*. Those who love will find each other there. Parents and children, dearest friends, families, will be united again. They will live over again the scenes long past. They will enjoy together the new delights. Mind remains unchanged by death. Memory is not lost. Love is not reduced. Real friendship is eternal. We go from one home to another; from the earthly to the heavenly home. We are the same, and our loves and tastes go with us. A noble Christian teacher of our own sent messages by a friend who was dying to a friend in heaven. One of our great theologians said that one of his profoundest anticipations of heaven was that he should see St. Paul there. It is quite common that dying

Christians are consoled in their parting with friends here by the thought that they shall see again waiting friends there. St. Paul comforts Christians with the assurance that those who are left alive and those who are fallen asleep shall *together* be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, at the time of the final assize.

It is a place of *spiritual life*. The contributions which this world will make to heaven will be mainly of capabilities. Souls renewed, forgiven, sanctified, will enter upon a higher life. The knowledge which they will take from this sphere will need revision. Its crudities will disappear in the clearer light there. There the day will break and the shadows will flee away.

It has always been a joy to saints that they should *know* hereafter. Here they theorize and guess and wonder: there they will know. Even the Word of God is vari-

ously interpreted. We look at facts, not only spiritual facts but secular facts, differently. Men cannot agree on matters of everyday life—on the conditions of civil society, on governmental policies, on systems of health and education and business. They cannot agree on revealed truth. The difficulty is in their own imperfection; in the refraction which this world produces; in the disordered faculties of their minds.

But heaven is a world of light and purity and power: so that the capabilities which are brought into exercise there will find a free and fine field. The tantalizing grasp of depravity will be broken. The fleshly conditions will be abandoned. The mind will work clearly and energetically and correctly. We shall walk in the light of the Lord, and in his light we shall see light. There is no need there of candle, nor of moon, nor of sun, for the Lord God giveth them light.

It will be a pleasure to work in that world. It is indeed a place of *rest*. There remaineth a sabbath rest for the people of God. They who die in the Lord rest from their labors. But it is rest for work. They will be swift to do, mighty to execute. The angels excel in strength, they do God's pleasure. They rolled away the stone from Christ's sepulchre. The angels are reapers. They pour out the bowls of divine wrath on the earth. They are ministering spirits. They attend Christ and execute His purposes; on this world, in other worlds, they are supremely active and efficient.

And the saints will be like the angels. They will be rulers of cities. They will be students of truth, looking into the deep things of God. The play of spiritual forces in them will be active and strong and fruitful. They will be Christ's vicegerents. Owing everything to Christ, it will be a

sublime satisfaction to them that they can serve him.

There are two questions which St. Paul asks that are full of suggestion: "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?" "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" Whatever meanings may be couched in this occult language, it at least associates them with their Lord in highest duty. It puts them in a place of honor and of power. He said, "I desire that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." In that home the redeemed will have personal intercourse with Christ and will enjoy his friendship. The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their Shepherd and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life.

A saint of our own day was asked if she did not enjoy the thought of meeting dear friends in the Father's house. She replied that "heaven is being with Christ, and to

be with Christ is heaven." She had often spoken of the delight of meeting her sainted father and mother in heaven and her children who had gone before; but the thought of the vision of Christ absorbed all other thought. This is like St. Paul. He put in the foreground "to be with Christ." This saint put Christ first and longed to be with him. She said, "It will be a day of unspeakable joy when we meet him here or there. I look with unfeigned amazement upon Christians who are reluctant to go. The spectacle, too often seen, of shrinking from the presence of Christ is one I cannot begin to understand. For my part, I am confounded when I see people hurt and distressed when invited home. How a loving Father must feel when his children shrink back, crying, 'I have so much to live for!' or, in other words, so little to die for." And when she herself came near to death she was

eager to go. "Don't you think you could ask the Lord to let me go?" she said to her husband. The feeling in her heart had become so overpowering that no earthly happiness, no interest, no distraction, could any longer satisfy her, or give her content, away from Christ; and she longed to be with him, where he is.

Now this was the experience of one who, as we say, had everything to live for: an honored husband, beloved children, a charming home, a most useful life and hosts of friends who loved her dearly. From all of these the Father's House drew her with its strong attractions. Her love to all her friends was very great, but to be with Christ was very far better; her love to him rose to be a dominant passion and she could not be detained; she must see her Saviour's face; she would go home.

II.

THE HOLY CITY.

CONQUERORS and monarchs plant within their realms great capitals to illustrate their achievements, to perpetuate their glory, to concentrate their trophies and the great works which they have called into being. So Romulus builded the beginnings of Rome; started on the banks of the sluggish Tiber a metropolis which should rule the world—first by military coercion, through the discipline and celerity of legions whose first lesson in the art of war was that they were never to accept of defeat, and then by spiritual domination which should awe the minds of men, of peoples, and of rulers as well; so making kings, emperors and their sub-

jects slaves of its imperious will. So Alexander founded Alexandria and began its enrichment with spoils of oriental conquests. So Peter the Great, on the marshes of the crystal Neva, drove the piles for the basis of a city which on its frozen zone should rival the ancient and splendid cities of the warmer latitudes, and amidst gleaming ice should renew miracles of art and splendors of civilization. So Berlin was builded on arid plains to enclose within its walls the fruits of learning and of art, and to be the centre of power which should dare to question the legitimacy of temporal or spiritual arrogance.

So a hundred cities along the sweep of history have risen in imposing strength and beauty, places of protection, of concentrated life, of largest results. The great cities have been the world's chief glory. Power has had its thrones in them. Genius has found its rewards in them. Princely fortunes have been

amassed in them. They have contained the glories of art and of architecture and been the centres of benevolence and religion. They have made the whole world tributary to them ; ships on every sea pointing approaching prows to their ports and caravans loaded with the spoils of all lands journeying with ceaseless march to their busy marts.

When, then, in apocalyptic vision the Spirit would represent to us the victorious and blessed state of the redeemed church, no better imagery, none more impressive, none that would be more thoroughly appreciated by the average mind, could be employed than that of an imposing and popular and brilliant CITY. It is so described : builded in the eternal heavens ; descending out of them from God ; planted firmly on the restored earth. It is a city of wonder. It is the firm and fair abode of all who have been redeemed unto Christ.

Of course it is described with imagery.

The account, as it is given, is figurative. But this is the only way, certainly it is the best way, in which it could be described to us. The imagery all means something. The startling figures represent facts. The allegory stands for actuality. We see this as it is painted in word-pictures, and we may conceive what these actually represent.

The vivid delineation of the Holy City by St. John presents to us *a walled city*. Walls were for protection. They encompassed the great cities of older times. They were builded to shut out sudden invasion, to resist the ordinary arms of warfare, to give their inhabitants time to organize for defence and for offence. Great pains were taken to make them strong and durable. A city was strong as its walls were strong. Babylon was deemed impregnable because there was no known engineering that could reduce its thick and lofty walls. When it was taken it was by stratagem,

in the security of midnight revel. The city of the saints, lowered down from heaven to earth, was entirely surrounded by a wall great and high. It was massive in thickness and in the solidity of its materials, and it rose aloft in imposing dimensions. Whoever should look upon that city would know that there was strength there and security there. Onsets from without would avail nothing against ramparts like these ; they would be broken like waves against a promontory of rock. Those who dwelt within them would have a perfect sense of safety.

The experience of the church, the experience of individual saints, in the earthly history and under the ordinary conditions, has been one of insecurity. Christians have been persecuted, have been hunted from place to place, have often been without any city or residence they could call their own. There is nothing darker in human history than the as-

saults that have been made upon the church, than the terrible sufferings which Christians have experienced on account of their religion. Their life has been the forfeiture for their faith. Even when better days have come, when, as now, it is reputable to be a follower of Christ, there has been spiritual insecurity; doubt has interrupted the fulness and satisfaction of faith, and many who were on the way have not known that they should reach the City of God.

But in the future the saints are to enjoy peace and security as if within impregnable walls. The time of doubt and the places of danger are all behind. They are the inhabitants of an impregnable city. No foe can ever break through those massive protections. No possible onset can shatter or even weaken them. All who dwell in that city are forever safe. This is the idea of the "wall great and high." Under this figure we are taught of a

coming place and period of security. Into the doubts and distresses of the present, the persecutions through which the church must pass, the perils that rise before every saint and the fears that dwell in the souls of disciples who are struggling forward, is projected this thought of a future of safety. It is a vision to cheer all followers of Christ: those in the midst of outward dangers, those who all their life-time are subject to inward fears. That magnificent City of God with its massive walls is to be their home, and forever. Keeping up good heart, and fighting a manly conflict a little longer, they will be safe. No more doubts, no more fears, no more foes, forever!

It is described as a *many-gated city*. The weak point of a walled city would be its gates, and therefore they were usually very few. But this city had "twelve gates." Looking forth in every direction they gave abundant and easy egress and ingress. There were

three on each side. Its inhabitants were not to be confined within its walls. The many open gates invited them to go forth to survey other wonders, to journey to other worlds, to minister to any who might be in need, to bear abroad the kindling story of their salvation. Glad as they might be within these splendid gates of pearl, theirs was to be no selfish joy. They were not to be shut up to song and service. Wide as God's universe was to be their mission. Wherever souls lived, throughout unbounded dominions of their Redeemer, they were to be his willing witnesses. The many gates, opening toward every quarter, invited to outside service; to the broad work of testimony.

Heaven is a place of benevolent joy and service. They are most ready for it, most in harmony with its blessed spirit, who live here not for themselves but for others; who are fullest of devotion for the unsaved, who live

in constant sympathy with the lost and needy of every land. Our toiling missionaries who have gone out from homes of refinement, from these cities of ripest civilization, from the advantages and pleasures of our free land, and who are caring for the degraded and miserable, and who are making Christ known to them as a Deliverer, and those too who with prayer and sympathy and money sustain them so that their work may be prospered, are most like the inhabitants of the holy city. For such is that city builded. In the same spirit which animated them on earth, out of love for the same Saviour whom they served here, will they go out of those gates toward the four quarters of the universe to give testimony to the glory of their Redeemer. The twelve gates are for the egress of the inhabitants.

They also indicate *accessibility*. They are gates of invitation. Swung back on every

side they seem to invite all men to enter them. They are gates of ingress. They stand open day and night. For men, for all men, east, north, south, west, they fling forth their inviting summons. The city is large enough for all. It is a great city. It was not built for Jews, but for Jews and Gentiles. It was not built for a select few, but for the many. As the gospel invites all men everywhere to repent, so do these many gates emphasize the invitation. As Christ was the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, so the many gates look out toward the whole world with their gracious appeal. Such is the sentiment involved in the "twelve gates." They indicate the openness and the accessibility of the city. They encourage the large and liberal spirit of Christian devotion, the spirit which led Christ to come forth from the Father, from the bright heaven, and to come into the world. The gates of heaven did not con-

fine him, the glories of heaven did not keep him from his divinest work.

Also, they encourage the effort of all to reach and to enter the city. The gates stand ever open for us, and from whatever point we look we may read on their pearly leaves our welcome. If, at last, any are not inhabitants of that holy city it will not be because they might not have been; it will be because they shut themselves out.

Other arguments may have been powerless over us; other calls may have found us deaf to their summons: this glorious vision of the city descending from heaven and set up on the earth may well arrest our attention, may attract our affection, may win us to the last effort to enter it.

We go round the world to *look*, even, at its great cities: this greatest city we may possess; we may live in it as heirs and heiresses of its glories and its wealth and its love.

The holy city is represented as a *guarded city*. All gates of fortified cities were guarded. There the enemy would seek to enter. In times of special peril the guards were greatly increased. The guards, one at each gate, are angels, strong, invincible, standing there in the might and conscious greatness of angelhood. No evil person, no wrong thing, could pass. A spear of light would flash through every disguise and every danger. The city was planted to be holy and for the holy.

Reference may here be made to the danger from Satan. Through the earth-history his power has been great. He invaded paradise in disguise and deceit. He robbed the holy of that which was most precious and inflicted upon the race the dreadful experience of sin. This evil power, this cunning and malicious spirit, has been at the bottom of all the wretchedness and sin of the world, delight-

ing in it and leading men captive with malignant joy. But though he entered *paradise* he cannot enter the holy city. Though he spoiled the earth-history, he is himself spoiled and foiled and can go no further. The adamantine walls forbid his access. The angels guard the twelve gates against his approach. He might deceive men: angels he cannot deceive; he might overcome men, but in the angel-strength he meets might greater than his own. No power, and no craft, even of Satan, will avail to enter those guarded gates. He and his are excluded eternally. Sleepless watch and resistless strength keep those pearl-gates. He has tempted the holy once successfully; he will never tempt the holy again. He has wrecked the old world and darkened its heavens with palls of sin. He cannot hurt the new heavens or the new earth.

Nor does it have reference to him alone. The revelation makes it clear that nothing

improper, unholy, sinful, false, shall be permitted to enter the holy gates. The holy city is for the holy. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." The wicked are without: they can never come within. The angel-guards will admit none of them. Those who were afraid to stand forth in the world as God's friends, who were afraid to maintain the principles of righteousness, those who took the place of infidelity and did not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, all who were given up to abominable vices, all whose hearts were full of murder and deceit, all worshippers of idols shall come to those gates in vain. There will be no entrance for them forever. The city was not built for such. Its guards are charged not to admit them. They have mingled with the good and loyal in the world, where wheat and tares have grown together. But the time of separation came, and the separation is final.

The strong angels bar the approach to all these classes. Their spears of light are leveled with precision against them all. No human power could avail against the angel power. The pearl-gates are guarded against the possibility of assault. It is utterly vain to attempt entrance by force or by strategy. The angels are wardens of the city. They hold the gates against all comers who have not the seal of Christ in their foreheads.

Let us not mistake the fact of the inevitable separateness of saints and sinners when the earth-life of trial and of changeless decisions is past. Behold an angel at every gate!

This is also a *saintly city*. The names of all the tribes of Israel are wrought on the gates, one name on each gate. Israel denotes the people of God. The denominations of Christians are there engraved on the gates of pearl. No saintly title is omitted. No church

bearing the marks of the Lord Jesus would look in vain for its name wrought on the gleaming pearl. In this world they are, in name, divided. But under their separate banners they recognize one Lord, and they are going to meet him and to be with him in one place, where he is and where he awaits them. Here they look at truth through different media and divide on what may seem to them important points. The different divisions are essential arms of one service, important divisions of one grand army under the banner of one supreme Leader.

Yet the names written on the gates are on the outer surface of all the gates : on the inner surface shines but one precious Name of light and glory, the name of CHRIST! You look in vain on that side for the earthly denominations! When these divisions of the Lord's own host march within they are known no more by their earthly titles : those

are left forever on the outside of the walls and gates. Heaven knows but one great, dear Name; the Name which is above every name; the one Name in which all trust, whatever may be the names by which they prefer to be known here. Within, the people of God will be one. They should be one on earth, if not in name then truly in spirit, in cordial recognition of each other, in full fraternity toward and love for one another, in acknowledged equality and in common labors. Christ's churches should work together in holy concord and charity and in the courteous and noble spirit of their Master.

So will it be to them no shame when within the gates they recognize each other, no longer indeed by their old titles, but by the new name which gleams like a star of light upon the forehead of each one of them.

These aspects of the holy city—walled, many-gated, guarded, saintly—present a city

worth attaining. There are splendid cities here, to visit which would give us great delight, whose glories draw our hearts with unceasing longings. There are cities to whose freedom it would be a priceless honor to be admitted, among whose great men and great works it would be a glory to live. There are cities the single sight of which would reconcile its absent citizen to die. But they are of small account in comparison with this. And this may be ours! It may be ours fully and forever! All the voices from it are voices of invitation and welcome.

III.

THE FOUNDATIONS.

WITH a friend and brother who has spent the last quarter of a century in Southern India I was examining some of the wonderful sun-pictures by which the works of other lands are painted with pencils of light for those of us who can never hope to visit them, and are reproduced with a vividness and accuracy which almost make the journey to them vain!

We were particularly drawn to the views of the massive and elaborate temples of that opulent clime, some standing in the midst of prolific gardens, some on the crests of lofty peaks, some in the centres of populous cities. They were builded in imposing, sometimes

in grotesque, always in highly-wrought architecture, and in styles differing from those to which we are accustomed as the mind of the farthest Orient differs from that of the Occident. But that which most closely drew my attention was the *refined finish of the foundations*. Down to the earth, and running into it and evidently continuing below it, the massive masonry was chiseled into beautiful and life-like forms of men and animals, in largest abundance and with consummate grace of design and execution. The bases of the temples were crowded with finest sculptures. No other parts of the sacred edifices had upon them more artistic taste and workmanship than these parts, which are the least observed and which are partly hidden in the soil itself. The beautiful bas-reliefs which are set in the façade of our finest structures were matched by these ornate and tasteful figures in all the foundations, even when

they would be partly hidden from sight. The fact was one of wonder and of beauty, and was full of suggestiveness. To what principle we are to trace so unique and graceful construction can only be discovered by study of the Hindu mind. It belongs to the better type of culture, to that refined and delicate discipline which is the offspring of experience chastened by trial. We might look for it in the highest mood of Grecian art: it is here also under the ardent skies of Hindustan. The sensitive and acute soul of the Eastern worshiper could not be satisfied with anything less than the best erection in the temple in which the god should dwell.

As we should suppose, we find the same thing in the noblest structures of Athens. The Parthenon stands on foundations worthy of what is builded on them, and its unseen portions were wrought with the same fidelity as the statue that crowned it. When Phidias

was asked why he spent so much skill on the concealed parts he replied, "The gods see them, and they must be satisfied."

Pagan fidelity in the East and in the West laying substantially and beautifully the unseen foundations and walls of sacred structures, building into what we might deem the inferior portions of the edifices the fine and finished workmanship of purest art, because to satisfy himself man must satisfy the gods, holds up to us an impressive example and teaches us a radical lesson.

In the apocalyptic visions of the holy city we have a description analogous to this: "The wall of the city had twelve foundations and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. . . . And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones." The twelve foundation stones which bore up the wall great and high and supported the gates, each one

of massive pearl, were composed of costly jewels. Gems that flash on the coronets of kings and are wrought into richest ornaments for the adornment of rank and beauty, and compose the guarded wealth of states, are here the bases of walls. The costliest crystallizations become foundations of light and beauty for the city of God. The jewel-stones that are the glory of palaces and the ornaments of thrones are but the ground-work of the heavenly metropolis. The first foundation flashes in the blood-red light of the jasper; the second in the azure glory of the sapphire; the third in the whiteness of the chalcedony; the fourth in the glittering green of the emerald; the fifth in the orange color of the sardonyx; the sixth in the deep red tinge of the sardius; the seventh has the golden glory of the chrysolite; the eighth the mingled blue and green of the beryl; the ninth the yellow light of the topaz; the tenth the mingled

green and gold of the chrysoprasus; the eleventh the royal purple of the jacinth; the twelfth the deep purple of the amethyst. That City of God rests on a mountain of light. Its foundations beam in all colors with the glory of sun and stars. Its walls stand on massive gems, durable and brilliant. Down to the very earth are laid these blocks of shining and strong precious stones. And in them were cut the names of greatest earthly significance, the names of the holy apostles of Christ. This city descending out of heaven from God suggests to us practical truths which lie at the basis of all endeavor.

In all true structure the element of chief significance is *good foundation*. We cannot begin at the top and build downward. We cannot even build upward, with any hope of solidity and durability, unless we lay well the basis on which the superstructure is to rest.

It is so in *personal character*. If this

rests on policy instead of principle, on worldly maxims instead of divine truths, it will be imperfect, and probably poor, character. The true man needs to be builded not on the crumbling concrete of earthliness, but on solid crystallizations of godliness. It is not enough, although many think that it is enough, to have the reputation of fair-mindedness and good standing: there should be the real basis for these in the carefully cultured and compacted character. It is not so much that we are in the sight of men which should influence us, as that the eye of the all-seeing God is upon us. We should build so that he will be satisfied. The things unseen of men are the real elements of character. What we *are* is what only God sees and knows. Many lives are fair to look upon, as we see them. For we look only at the surface and at that which is most conspicuous. But the seeming is quite another thing from the actual. The

structure may have a semblance of strength, while from bottom to top it is a combination of weakness. Character that is begun wrongly will be wrong throughout its whole development. It needs foundations that are worthy. It must rest on truth and integrity and virtue, on faith also, and on godliness. Starting from these, it will stand and grow in stateliness and strength. We have men of weak character, unreliable in storm and disaster, because nothing solid and massive enters into their substructure. They stand on rolling cobbles and tumbling plaster-walls, on mere substitutes for truth and goodness. We have also men whom nothing moves, whom all other men trust, whose presence gives confidence, whose counsel insures safety, because they are men of substantial character resting on righteousness.

It is so also *in affairs*. We are in the midst of great public trouble and solicitude

because there seems to be a lack of good basis for public conduct. The loss of confidence in public men comes from their own unreliability. They have perverted the trusts that were confided to them, have subordinated duty to self-advantage, have sought spoils rather than faithful service. We want a return to downright honesty, the revival of right doing, the simplicity of single-mindedness in the discharge of obligation.

These must be the foundation-stones of affairs. Then men will have confidence in their fellow-men; law and government will command respect, and prosperity will return. The air is full of reform; but the word is not enough, the clamor for it is meaningless. We want that which it means: truth, fidelity, conscientiousness, and the sense of responsibility to God. It is vain to push men forward into public places under mere cries for change and improvement. The men them-

selves must have right character and must take the posts of rulership in the fear of God. We must go down to the very foundations in these things, and all the more because there has been so much perversion and fraud, by which the conscience and the sense of responsibility have been weakened.

The same thing holds true *in the Christian life*. There is a great deal of it, or what is supposed to be it, which is builded on unworthy bases. It rises from mere feeling, from outward profession, from the observance of certain ordinances. The Christian life should stand on the best foundation. It should be based on inflexible and eternal principle. A Christian should be a good man. By nothing is the gospel so much promoted among the nations to which we are carrying it as by the true, honest, upright living of those who are converted by it. These, say their neighbors, were once liars,

now they are truthful; were once vile, now they are pure; once used false weights and measures, now deal honestly. The religion is therefore judged to be true. There is no argument anywhere for Christianity like the life of a consistent Christian. This life is not negative only—abstaining from what is wrong, not doing that which nobody should do: it is decidedly and thoroughly positive, demanding from one who professes it that he shall illustrate it; demanding active virtues, positive principles, duties that carry good results in them.

The great and strong foundations of the Christian life are *repentance*, actual living sorrow for sin to the extent of forsaking it; *faith* in a personal, mighty Saviour, invisible now but wholly apprehended in the utter want, the desolation and longing, the perplexity and hunger of the soul, and in the fullness of satisfaction with which he is accepted. And this

faith is vital. It takes Christ into the soul to be its light. It trusts in him as a Friend. It walks forward with him in grateful testimony. It serves him with gladness and to the end. "If ye continue in my words then are ye my disciples indeed."

These are the underlying principles of Christian living, the true foundations of Christian character to which the promises of Salvation stand. There is strength in them and endurance. They will survive shock and change, storm and all trial. There is meaning for all time in that word of Christ, *my disciples indeed*. Not in name only, not in outward profession, not in semblance; in deed and in truth, in devotion, in self-denial, in likeness to him, in living faith in him; these are what Christ calls for; in such he takes pleasure. "Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his, and, Let every

one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

On such foundations of strength and durability, symbolized by the massive and compact gem-stones under the wall of the holy city, society and the church and individual character would stand securely and lastingly.

Together with the strength implied in the substance, *elements of grace and beauty* should enter into all structural life even from its foundation. Dark, flinty rock, ungainly masses of granitic substance, would hold up lofty and thick walls. Coarse and angular ways may consist with real goodness. But the revelation presents us with the foundations laid of most precious stones, billowy with light of every tint, reflecting at every point the glory of sun and the beams of stars. Into our dispositions and purposes, into the underlying plans and habitudes of our life, should enter those elements which will make

our lives graceful and beautiful, which will honor the principles we profess, which will make personal religion winning and rayful, which will attract other minds with which we come in contact to the experience of the truest life and the noblest labor.

An able commentator of more than two centuries ago writes : " I cannot tell what to make of these precious stones with which they are said to be *garnished*, unless it be their spiritual gifts and habits of grace ; the various manifestations of the Holy Spirit given to the apostles to profit the church withal, with which they adorned the doctrine of the gospel and won upon the pagan world, making themselves admirable in the eyes of men and women." The centuries since he wrote have produced no more satisfactory explanation.

There may be something quaint, and even fanciful, in the meanings which he gives to the stones themselves, but they are not far, as

it would seem, from their fair significance when he makes the jasper the type of steadiness; the sapphire of heavenly-mindedness; the chalcedony of zeal; the emerald of vigor; the sardonyx of various graces; the sardius of courage; the chrysolite of love; the beryl of understanding; the topaz of searching out divine mysteries; the chrysoprasus of gravity; the jacinth of joy; the amethyst of temperance. These are divine gifts and graces which have always characterized and ennobled true religion and which have given Christianity the confidence and control of men. They are the precious foundation-stones, beaming with divine light, reflecting in their pure substance the glory of heaven. The more they are possessed and practised the more is the world impressed by the superiority of Christ's religion. We wish to *win* the world to him. We must do it by building on beautiful foundations. Love must shine

forth in all our labor. Love's labor is not lost. It will gain a way to hardest hearts. Men need sympathy. They are poor, wretched, crushed. They are lonely, abandoned, lost. They want Christ. And we are to carry Christ to them, in his tender words, in his timely promises, in his sweet forgiveness, in his divine charity, in his human brotherliness. Then our acts will shine with a splendor beyond that of sapphire and emerald and flaming chrysolite. A great queen, of captivating beauty, paid large treasure for a solitary gem which she bound with its flaming glory for a frontlet on her brow, thinking so to heighten her charms. But there is no glory like good deeds and no charm like the charm of love. We can wear nothing like the ornament of a divine spirit and heighten our beauty with nothing so well as with compassion and sorrow for the lost. Three empires conferred crosses of honor upon the daughter of another

empire for her impartial love, courage, devotion, in her tender ministries upon the fields of slaughter. Heaven will give its undecaying crown to us for our ministry of pity and love for those whom Christ would save. We shall light up the dark places in homes and hearts to which we give the promises of the Saviour. The church can make itself lovely before the world if it will represent the spirit and practise the works of its divine Founder. It will draw the world to it, as out of darkness living things are won to the light.

There is still another aspect suggested by this subject. In the epistles we have CHRIST presented as the "foundation," *Christians* as the "living stones," together constituting a "holy temple" for the glory of God. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. To whom coming as unto a living stone, chosen of God and precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up

a spiritual house. Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall be manifest. Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, in whom all the building groweth into a holy temple in the Lord. In these glowing terms we have Christ as a living precious stone, the foundation of his church ; and Christians, also living precious stones, builded on him, and so the whole holy temple rising in wondrous glory of light and beauty into a spiritual house unto the praise of God. Not only is there a foundation, as if the whole base of the temple were turned into one solid sapphire, flashing with the blaze of a thousand suns, but on it rise all other precious stones, souls of saints, with the mingled color and beauty and light of all the gems, raying on one another and raying on all the world.

Such is the description of the church on its precious foundation. Surely there is no other foundation than Christ. There is no other glory like his. There is no one else so full of light. There is but one Foundation that is tried and sure.

These brilliant gem-foundations are designed to attract us upward. They are aspects of the heaven to which we aspire. Every footstep takes us nearer an eternal home of joy and peace and loving friends. We cross the valley, we mount the hill-top, and the pinnacles of light and the foundations of glory rise clearer on our vision. Through the gloom of suffering and the mists of worldliness we see the outlines of a great metropolis into which go the redeemed of earth, and from which pours forth a tide of light and melody. As men have drawn near to some city of fame, to Jerusalem or to Rome, they have not been able to sleep for the thought of

its glory and its wonder. All night they have strained their sight through the darkness toward its domes and spires. All night the very earth beneath them has throbbed with its old renown, and the processions of its warriors and its wise men have marched forth from its opened gates. All night the stars above it have gleamed with new glory and the voices of welcome have rung forth from its waiting walls.

As we draw near the city of God, nearer than when we first believed, near the glories that are greater than our imagination can picture, nearer the friends who have passed in a little before us, near the Christ whom not having seen we love, near to his throne and his angels and the wonders of his presence, we cannot fail to be on watch. The old heavens ray down their light upon us. The glory of God floods the world and our souls.

Dear old faces look through the azure
as in longing for us. Clear voices, the
voices that thrilled us in other days, ring
forth their welcome. Be it ours to send
upward our glad response and to press for-
ward in newness of life.

I V.

THE VISION OF GOD.

WHILE our most beloved friends are passing away, out of our sight and our companionship, it is a matter of grateful recognition and thanksgiving that we can know so much of the state into which they are introduced through faith in Jesus Christ. We are not shut up merely to what we may know by present experience, or to what we may learn from them in their anticipation of the future. There are doors that open out upon blessed realities through which we may look and at which we may listen. The closing chapters of the Revelation, concluding the statement of all that God has thought best to give us in the inspired Scriptures, are most

appropriately full of descriptions of the world to which the righteous dead depart.

No other part of the Bible contains so much on this subject. As though the facts that are revealed would not be complete unless something more distinct were said, to animate the saints in their journey and their struggle, to comfort them under the burdens of their weakness and sorrow, the concluding chapters of the sacred books are made full and rich with ample statements of the future glory and blessedness of the saved.

The description is in highly-wrought human imagery, and is so brought down to our comprehension. The heavenly facts cannot be put within the forms of human speech, they can only be suggested by it: only imperfectly and dimly suggested. We could not describe to a barbarian the complicated and accurate and wonder-working machinery of the printing-press or of the

great clock of Strasburg. Tropes and symbols might excite his imagination so that he would picture to himself a thing of power and wonder and more than barbaric skill, yet, when he should look upon the one, reproducing to the eye the tireless work of thinkers, or upon the other, keeping time to the march of suns and constellations, he would behold something utterly unlike that which he had fancied to himself. So, when our feet cross the threshold of the gate through which we shall enter into the unspeakable glory, there will burst on our vision the sight of realities and the charm of services utterly and unutterably beyond anything which the brilliant imagery of the Scriptures had suggested to our fancy.

These, the beloved and the victorious, who lie down in their beds for their last slumber, who sleep on earth and awake in heaven, who fall at their tasks as warriors fall

with their armor buckled on, who surrender in the final conflict to the force which grapples with every one at last successfully, consoled as they have been by the truths of inspiration, eager as they have been to know by experience what they have grasped by faith, have found the glory and the joy to be vastly superior to their faint anticipation. It would be but a dim truth in the song which we sing, "The half was never told," for the poetry of this world is the commonest prose of heaven. It has not entered into the mind of man on this side to conceive the things which God has prepared for his saints on that side.

The Scripture dwells on the fact that they shall see his face, as a *characterization* of the experience of the upper world. Blessed, said our Lord, are the pure in heart: "for they shall see God." For now, said that strenuous apostle who fought his way victoriously up to the shining gate, for now we see in a mirror,

darkly: but then face to face. We are stimulated to press on in all Christian endeavor, knowing that when he shall appear we shall be like him; "for we shall see him as he is."

In this expressive phrase is promised a special revelation of the godhead, the exact nature of which we cannot possibly anticipate—for what human thought can conceive a form in which the Infinite One can be embodied? Yet it has pleased him thus to image to us the glory of that revelation. *THE VISION OF GOD*—the ability and the privilege to look upon his face, to see the expression of him of whom we have long thought as a Father, who is love, who is more to us than all dearest friends, whose infinite greatness is paralleled only by his infinite goodness, the sight of whom is the supreme triumph—is thus held forth to the ambition and the affection of all who would be at last among the redeemed.

Men have gone far and have sacrificed much to see the face of one who has been renowned in human affairs ; of the great leader who has inspired others and led them by his personal magnetism ; of the gifted writer who has gained human mastery by the spell of his imagination or the force of his logic. They have felt that the intensest aspiration of their lives had found its gratification when they had seen the features and caught the expression of one whose personal power they had felt but whose acquaintance they had never before made. And it is the supreme moment in the immortal life of the saint when he is permitted to see the face of Him whom not having seen he has loved, and to whom he had intrusted interests of boundless significance.

In this is a decided *unlikeness to facts* within our present human experience, so that it is evident that a new order of things will

arise on the entrance to the immortal life. There they shall see his face. Here he is unseen. Our Lord declared, No man hath seen God at any time. He is called in Scripture the invisible God. Moses endured as seeing Him who is invisible. An apostle speaks of him as One whom no man hath seen nor can see. It is not permitted to mortal eyes to look upon the glory of the divine face. They could not endure the sight. They would be blinded by such glory. They are not made for that supernal vision.

Stars and suns, the brilliance of gems and of flames, may be endured, but not the glory of the infinite God.

We must be changed before it shall be permitted to us to look on that majestic countenance which is the light of the heavenly world. It will be a new heaven and a new earth in which God and his people will dwell in concord and in which they shall see

his face. A new order of things will arise on the experiences of redeemed souls. New facts of life, of revelation, of vision, will obtain among them. Sometimes an aurora wreaths its glory around the face of the departed, or the pure waxen features are kindled with a beauty which was never equaled in life, as though at the very entrance to the everlasting home something of the splendor there had flashed out upon one who had merely looked within. It will be all new. When they shall see His face that will be a new revelation. And all other sights and sounds and services will be new. We cannot anticipate it because it is altogether beyond anything of which we have experience. We are far from knowing God and far from knowing his imperial and infinite surroundings. These disciplines and realities through which we are passing are preparatory to the revelations on high, but they have no other relations to

them. Here we cannot see God and live; there we shall live evermore in the sight of his face.

This vision of God implies a *personal nearness* to him. To us heaven is the land that is very far off; the throne is remote. Our sight cannot reach thither. But somewhere heaven is. That city of God has a locality as distinct and defined as any of the world's great capitals. We cross the seas, we journey on the land, that we may look upon the glories of old Rome or see the sanctified places of Jerusalem. We draw near to them and our eyes flash with their reflected splendors, and our hearts leap up at the thrill of their grandeur and renown. Old histories unroll before us; the colonizations and conquests of the past pour out in vivid panorama to our thought; the great old names leap forth as though they stood for living forms; and when at length our feet stand within the

enclosure of their walls, and we look on that of which we have studied and thought, it is the supreme realization of our lives.

The pilgrim journey of those who are saved is to a city not less real. Every step they take in the life of faith is toward it. Every victory they gain over sin and self and Satan is a victory over whatever opposes their progress thither. They are going there just as truly as men go to Athens or to Jerusalem. It is somewhere: and they are to enter it and to see it. They shall see His face whose imperial throne is there. It is a city that has no night; no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. It is a city of magnificence and splendor. Its gates are represented as of solid pearls; its foundations as of most precious stones; its pavements as of pure gold. It is full of glory and honor, of praise

and purity and love. Those who go there shall serve him and shall see his face. They will be near him. For he will dwell among them, as a Father in the midst of his confiding household. All that they have anticipated will be met by realities finer than their anticipations.

This vision also carries with it the *understanding of things now obscure*. Here we walk in the dark : we see in a mirror, darkly. We are in the midst of perplexity. We can get no answers to the questions we inevitably and vainly ask. There is mystery on all our paths. We cannot understand ourselves; nor can we understand our relations to mysteries around us; nor can we know God. We are tangled in a net of our own weaving. We are snared in gins knit by our adversaries. We cry, Give us light; but the darkness settles all the same.

Now the sight of His face brings the solu-

tion of every riddle, the revelation of all mystery. When we see God and know him we shall know as also we are known. If there is one thing clearer than any other about heaven it is that that world is *a world of light*. There is no darkness at all there; no dimness, even. From flashing foundation to glittering pinnacle it is all light. There is no night there: nothing to make night of; no sin; no folly; no forgetfulness of God. The throne is light; the street is transparent; all the saved walk in the light of it: the Lord God giveth them light: the Lamb is the light thereof. We may be sure of full and blessed understanding there of all the hard and obscure things to which we are doomed here. The mysterious facts which stand like veiled statues around us will start forth in native and naked verity. We shall know the reasons of things, the wisdom of events, the divine perfection of God's ways. To see

his face is to be admitted to knowledge and light.

“No grief can change their day to night ;
The darkness of that land is light.”

They who see the face of the King are within his favor and protection ; so that this vision secures *the full enjoyment of the saved*. Suppose that on some blessed island of the ocean there were no tears. Who would not wish to go there and to be one of its ever-happy inhabitants ? It would be the El Dorado of the world. Ships would sail out of every weeping port for it. Men would part with their possessions that they might invest on that happiest isle. Poets would sing of it. Those who should return from it would be sought by all, that they might hear the story of the glad people.

Where God's face is seen there are no tears, no pain, no sorrow, no curse, no aching

hearts, no disappointment, no shadows, no solicitude. We cannot read the twenty-first and twenty-second chapters of the Book of Revelation without knowing that the description is of a world of perfect enjoyment.

And it is to have no end.

No bliss is perfect that is not eternal. Men have solaced themselves that their greatest works would last. We like to throw the thought of endurance upon that which we have carefully wrought. They asked an old Master why he worked so carefully and long upon his art; and his answer was: "I paint for eternity!" The happiness of heaven is as eternal as God. Its trees are trees of life; its rivers are rivers of life; those who go within it go no more out; its pleasures are forevermore. "Thy sun shall no more go down," for "the Lord shall be thine everlasting light." "They shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away."

“Soon—and forever—
Such promise our trust—
Though ‘ashes to ashes
And dust unto dust,’
Soon, and forever,
Our union shall be
Made perfect, our glorious
Redeemer, in thee!”

When Richard Baxter was dying some one asked him how he did; and he replied, “Almost well.” Life and health and eternal joy were just before him; in a few minutes he would be forever free and happy. Here he was sick and burdened; there he would be well and full of vigor forever. In her last moments Mrs. Wesley said to her children who were grouped around her bed, “As soon as I am released sing a psalm of praise to God.” She would have the voices here unite with her own glad and eternal song.

All those who in their strength and beauty and loveliness pass away from us, if

they could speak to us from out the heaven to which their ransomed spirits flew, would bid us sing rather than sigh, would bid us dry every tear and hush every murmur and unite with them in thanksgiving that, after weariness and suffering and anxiety, they are at length at home.

Let us, as we may be summoned, tenderly lay away the casket in trust of the warm, sweet earth, "earth to earth": let us be comforted that the gem which it held has been taken by Him who formed it and who had engraven his own name upon it, to be kept forever, safely, near his throne, spirit to spirit; rejoicing with them that they have seen the King in his beauty.

V.

THE CENTRAL SIGHT OF HEAVEN.

THE transaction which made Mount Calvary the most sacred mountain of the world was not a transaction which could be localized and limited within the event itself. It had relations to what had gone before: and it was connected with what was to come after, not merely on the theater of this world's events, but in transcendent and glorious scenes beyond the power of our conception now, suggestions of which are made in the strange imagery of the Apocalypse which we can but half interpret.

From the earliest times, and through the ritual of the Mosaic economy, the slain lamb had been offered on the altars as a sacrifice

for sin. Abel, who was a keeper of sheep, brought of the firstlings of his flock as an offering unto the Lord. The Levitical rule, in respect to the Passover, was that every man of Israel should take a lamb—a lamb for a house, a lamb without blemish—whose blood should be freely struck upon the door-posts of every house. The sacrifice of peace-offering might be a lamb without blemish, which was to be offered before the Lord. Through all the generations of repenting and believing souls who looked forward to the sacrifice of Christ, the divine Passover, the great Peace-offering, the slain lamb had been the type of him whose atoning blood was to avail for the putting away of the sins of the world.

When the great prophet who was contemporaneous with Christ saw Jesus coming to him in Bethabara he said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of

the world!" On another day when he saw Jesus as he walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

In after years, as Christ came to Mount Calvary, the altar of the world, where he was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, where his soul was made an offering for sin, type and prophecy were alike fulfilled in Him who was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb so he opened not his mouth.

Thus all the past was wrought with bloody links to the cross. All the sacrifices for transgression pointed to Him who was numbered with the transgressors and who bare the sin of many. All the white lambs of innocence on old altars were prophetic of the Lamb on whom the Lord laid the iniquity of us all.

But no less interesting is the relation

which this event holds to the heavenly life. The past has gone, but the future is before us. The past was for others, but the future is for all.

In the descriptions of the heavenly state which are given in the last book of the Bible we may notice how much the Lamb figures. "I heard the voice of many angels . . and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." And again the voices of all the universe are heard, "Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb forever and forever." We have brought before us as in celestial review the bright inhabitants of that world who have His Father's name written on their foreheads, and we are told,

"These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." In the conflicts of the future he is the Leader of the hosts of heaven: "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them; for he is the Lord of lords and King of kings." Of the festivities of heaven it is written, "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb." The throne there is "the throne of God and the Lamb." "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." "The Lamb is the light thereof."

The redeemed who are before the throne of God and who serve him with a joy that knows no ebb, and on whom no sorrow and no disaster shall fall forever, are those whom the Lamb, which is in the midst the throne, shall feed and shall lead unto living fountains of waters.

By these multiplied and most significant

expressions is set forth the great, vital truth that THE CENTRAL SIGHT OF HEAVEN is one that represents the redeeming work of Christ. The language is highly symbolic. We are not to suppose that the Redeemer is actually represented in heaven as in the form of a Lamb, any more than that he appeared in that form when John the Baptist said of him, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!" As the central figure and the crowning glory of the great bright world of the saved, the Redeemer is so manifested to the inhabitants of heaven as to set forth the fact of his redemptive work on earth. That which is the most significant truth in this world's history is in some way made prominent and præeminent in that world. That to which men are pointed in this life, as most important and essential, is that to which the attention of all heaven is turned.

This Aspect of Heaven vividly suggests

the influence of the sacrifice of Christ as the eternal revelation of God. We do not know in what form the Redeemer was expressed to the sight of the inhabitants of heaven before his work was wrought on this world. But after that he was expressed, and forever will be, in such way as to declare his great sacrificial work for the salvation of mankind. Those who look to the throne will forever see that fact represented there. Bright as God's glory is, great as his being is, wonderful and brilliant as may be the manifestation of himself, copious as may be the resources of his revelation of himself, there yet stands forth the impressive fact, that from the ascension of our Lord, after his work of humiliation and shame and death was over, he was thereafter, in the midst of his reoccupied throne, represented as the Redeemer of this lost world.

He might be represented in his eternal

revelation by some mode that would exalt him as Creator, as eternally self-existent, as infinite in his being and perfections; by some presentation that would exalt his greatness: but in truth he is represented by that which sets forth his humiliation and by that which stands for the extreme of lowliness and condescension and self-sacrifice. Is it then, that this, which in our human terms and in our human ideas is abject and self-emptying and derogatory, is really the most God-like, the most honorable and glorious, the chief representation of what God is, so that when it is achieved once on this low earth it must, therefore and thereafter, be expressed in the very revelation which God forever makes of himself to those who are permitted to know him? Is it so that the sacrifice of Calvary is the greatest thing that has yet proceeded from heaven, and that the expiation of the world's guilt, made in the

anguish and death of the Cross, is the most complete and enduring manifestation of the Godhead, so that it must be permanently set forth and commemorated in the appearance of the Son of God on the throne of heaven? Then how will the judgments of this world be reversed! Then how different will God be from what men have represented him to be! He could not withhold himself from what he did for us here. The whole story of redemption is not extra and strange, but it is just the story of what God is, and of what he wants to be considered to be. Christ's death is a necessity of his being. Christ's death is simply God doing what God, if he be God, must do. He could not keep from saving men, from making a propitiation of such a nature and extent that they might be saved. The cross is a monument of what God is. The work of Christ in this world in our behalf is the work of God working like

himself. He would have been untrue to himself if the facts of the Christ had not been facts on this earth.

This representation is symbolic and pictorial, but it stands as symbol and picture of a mighty truth, and that truth is that God proposes to be revealed to the inhabitants of heaven as the Saviour of sinners. By whatever other mode he might be revealed he chooses this mode. And it is fair therefore to say that the self-sacrifice of God in Christ, that the giving of himself to the agony and death of the cross in order that sinners might be redeemed, is the most genuine revelation of God.

He made men free, free agents, but because they abused their freedom in sin he did not, he could not, therefore leave them to the fatal consequences of their perverse choice, but he gave himself by an infinite offering to save them. And he wishes it to be under-

stood that this is the true revealment of what he is. So we are taught in the highly symbolic representations of the Apocalypse that in the midst of the throne he appears as the Redeemer who suffered for the sins of a guilty world.

This aspect of heaven also sets forth *the position of the redeemed* in the heavenly life. They will come there not as original inhabitants of that world, but as immigrants to it from another world. Its scenery may all be different from that to which they have been accustomed. Its employments may all be wondrously new to them. The suggestions of its society and of its facts may strangely impress them. But one thing will be overpoweringly operative on all their susceptibilities : their relation to the central figure of that world ; to the one Being for whom all heaven has homage and love.

There are all along in the Scriptures inti-

mations of something supremely blessed in the coming experience of saints: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard," what they are to receive; there are things that God has prepared, laid up, for them. Know ye not that ye shall judge angels? Ye shall sit on thrones: the glory that thou gavest me I have given them: the Lamb shall lead them, and such like.

But here we have a still further fact brought out, and one which is more significant. He in whom we have trusted and by whom we are saved makes the fact of his salvation of us prominent and preëminent in heaven. We had thought of it as a thing to be gratefully remembered and joyfully commemorated. We had thought that it would be a blessed thing to see his face. We had thought that faith would be lost in sight. But what if we find that faith is sight; that the faith by which we had penitently taken hold

of Christ and had walked with him in the changes of a mortal life is matured and perfected until it becomes sight? What if we find that he who was our Saviour in this world, who endured shame and humiliation and suffering and death for us, chooses to have that fact made expressive of what he is, so that those who look at the throne shall see in the midst of it that which emphasizes the redemptive work of Christ?

We think that we have known something of Christ here as we have clung to him in our sorrow for sin, in our bewilderment through temptation, in our weakness through the stress of conflict, in our anguish under crushing trial, in our victory over the enemy. We think that we have prized somewhat the great work that he has done for us as his peace has come into our troubled souls, as his forgiveness has swept the dark past away, as his friendship has made all occupation

sweet, as his foregoing steps have brightened the future for us, as his cross has pledged for us all that we need to have God give us. We think that we appreciate to some degree, though it be small, the work that God has done for us in the gift of his Son, in the offering of the Saviour as a Lamb slain, in the sacrifice by which atonement was made for our sins, in the self-suffering by which God was enabled to come to us with his full reconciliation.

But a new experience dawns. Salvation is not a thing merely to be remembered and commemorated and to praise God for and to look back upon. All that we have known of Christ is but the conception of childhood. All that we have prized of his work is the imperfection of immaturity. All that we have apprehended of our salvation has been like sight in twilight. In heaven God is, first of all, Saviour of sinners. In the midst of the

throne that is made apparent. The divinest fact of the Godhead is that he can sacrifice himself.

The position of the redeemed is of those who have had the fullness of God poured upon them, for whom God has made manifest more of himself than for any others, of those who are brought nearest to God. The greatest meaning that heaven gives is that *God has saved sinners*. The throne expresses the meaning of the empire. The throne of heaven, in the very midst of it, expresses the divine Saviour slain for sinners.

One of the greatest and best of the men of our times has written: "Set your heart like a flint against every suggestion that cheapens the blood of the dear, great Lamb, and you will as surely get the meaning of Christ crucified as that he left his life in the world." As then we behold this heavenly vision we get a new meaning of Christ cru-

cified, and so we shall come to a new love for him and shall hear anew the call to a life henceforward of self-sacrifice for him.

If we wish to be like him we must sacrifice ourselves for others: for our brethren, to make their lives better and happier, to comfort them in trial and poverty and defeat and loneliness, to strengthen them in tasks and conflicts; for our neighbors, to make every neighborhood and street better because Christians are living in it who are living like Christ, who are bearing burdens for others and making self-denials for those who are needy and lost.

Self-living is not Christ-living. Self-living is not the legend of heavenly living. It is not of the spirit of the "Lamb slain" that there should be the domination of the worldly spirit. Not now do we look into heaven and see the symbol that St. John saw in the midst of the throne: but in the most express-

ive symbols of this world we see the great fact of the Lamb slain: significant of the greatest fact of this world and of heaven. May the divine Spirit bring all who read into the contemplation of it, not only, but into the partaking of it also, that the crucified Christ may be formed in us, so that we, in our poor way and to our limited extent, and within our circle of activity, may live out Christ for the solace of his people, for the saving of his enemies, for the satisfying of himself!

VI.

THE HOMES OF HEAVEN.

AS our Lord with his chosen disciples stepped forth from the house in which they had observed the Last Supper, and the gloom of the night met them, he pointed to the brilliant heavens, glowing, as they do in the Eastern skies, with the light of stars and marching constellations, and said, Beyond these visible glories, in my Father's House, that great over-world where he dwells and where my home was from of old—and to which I am soon to ascend and to which you, whom I dearly love, will by and by follow me—in that regal realm are many mansions: many dwelling-places, many homes.

In old English the word *mansion* did not mean a large and costly abode: it meant rather a dwelling-house, where the family lodged and rested when the out-door day's work was done. In the New Testament of Wicliffe, translated five hundred years ago, it reads: "In the hous of my fadir ben many dwellynsis." In the New Testament of Tyndale, which was the translation used by Shakespeare and Lord Bacon, the word was rendered *mansions*: and that translation is substantially the one we now have. It means the abiding-place, all that is summed up in our sweet word HOME. It tells of household character, of distinct and durable dwellings. We appreciate the misery that is designated by the word homeless: the homeless wanderer. We can feel the satisfaction that is expressed in the word homeward-bound; the substantialness implied in home-bred and home-made.

Now Christ assures us, "In the City of God are many homes; homes for you and such as you. To that city, whose glories are known to me, whose homes and thrones are of my creation, I shall soon ascend. I will not leave you in loneliness and orphanage. For I am going to prepare a place for you; to make ready a home—as homes are made ready for coming guests, for a bridal pair, for the returning family. The place is already there: I go to arrange it for you." We are homeward-bound. We are going above the stars, which are symbols of the light and glory beyond, into that world of brightness and glory where the Father dwells and where the waiting homes stand in their varied beauty; many in number and in kind, differing in architecture and size and splendor, but all lighted by the glory of God, all attractive to the eye, all fitted to the taste and quality of their coming occupants; as in some earthly city, which has

been laid out and builded under the supervision and taste of a competent architect, may be seen habitations adapted to the wants and capacities, the means and enjoyments, of a thousand families—some of humble appearance, some of imposing dimensions, some plain in their structure, others elaborate and expensive—but all attractive and convenient and home-like, and exactly fitted for their various and rejoicing inhabitants.

These homes are *in the Father's House*; in the heaven where he dwells and reigns; where his imperial throne is and where his glory is revealed. "It is my Father," Christ tells us. "You have learned to love me, and you will love Him. My Father is your Father, and the place to which I go and to which you will come is His abode." In a royal city we have seen the palace of its king, as in London or Berlin, and all around it, on its parks and avenues and its minor streets, the residences

of its loyal people, some of stately size and beauty, like the mansions of Belgrade, or of the Unter den Linden, and others adapted to the means and tastes of their possessors, but in them all loving and loyal citizens, proud of the palace and of the monarch whose capital is their dwelling-place.

The homes of heaven are happy homes, because they are in the Capital of the King, because they are where their dwellers can see the King in his beauty. Here God does not fully reveal himself. We are like citizens who dwell in some remote country or province of a kingdom, who have heard of the palace and the king and the great city but have not yet seen them. To be permitted to come and dwell there, where we can behold the glory and the glorious One, will be the joy and crown of life. It is "*my* Father." It will be, then, the home of Christ. He to whom his people owe their salvation,

who by his wounds, and suffering, and death did open the kingdom of heaven to all believers, will be there, will dwell among them, will guide them unto fountains of waters of life, will be their Shepherd and their Friend. To be near him, to be with him, is the dearest aspiration of his followers. They know something of the blessedness of walking in his ways, of studying his words, of obeying his commands, but they naturally long to know more of him and to see his face.

There are *many* mansions. Heaven is a large place. It has a great population. In it are the old inhabitants who have never known any other home; who began their life and have continued it there. In it are already gathered many new inhabitants; many souls redeemed from sin and sanctified by the Spirit. And the colonization is to go on: the generations of all time will augment it: the people of every land will send their emi-

grants to it : the world's growing population will more and more set their faces toward it : and by and by, in the golden ages that are predicted, all living men may become candidates for its immortality. There will be room for all. No pent-up city, no contracted country, invites the saints. He who has gone there to prepare a place is the Lord of the universe, and its boundless spaces and creations are all subject to his will. He knows what his work on earth is finally to result in. It cannot be measured by what we have seen as yet. There are men of such contracted views that they judge God by what is already evolved of his providence in the world, and because the history, as they deem it, is a failure so far, they consider themselves called to be apologists for God, and they try to justify his ways by advancing hypotheses and speculations of their own devising. The Lord God Almighty is not to be judged by them ;

his Kingdom is not be constructed after human rules: his providence is longer than men's measuring lines: he does not need justification at their tribunal. It is a whisper that we have heard of him; but the thunder of his power who can understand? His way is in the sea, and his path in the deep waters; too deep for their leaden plumbets to sound; too broad for their brazen quadrants to measure. Not yet is his vast purpose unfolded. On, in the millenniums that are to be, God will vindicate himself. It is his own question, "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" Christ, as his word declares, shall be satisfied, and that is enough for us. The many mansions will be filled. It is an "eternal city" in which they are builded.

One has said, "On us there shimmers from above light from many mansions. It is a city of God that beams upon us, whose

golden streets stretch forth into remotest infinitude. We see not its furthest battlements: its nearest ones *do* meet our gaze. And when we consider that light from them is thousands of years in reaching us, and that, starting from a remoter point, it is millions of years on its way, we may well call the city of the living God an eternal city."

The homes of heaven are places *prepared* for their residents. What that work of preparation is we may not altogether understand. The place was already there. Heaven was of old, but the entrance of the redeemed into it was of a special design. They are to be welcomed of the King: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." And we are reminded of things which God hath prepared for them that love him. It is as though the upbuilding of the city of homes were going forward under the eye and direc-

tion of him who builded all the universe. At first only God was there ; afterward the holy angels came into possession ; then came the redemption of man and the reception into the heavenly dwellings of those who were saved. As the redemption went on, and the number increased of those who were admitted to heaven, the homes were multiplied that it might be fulfilled that is written, "For thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Christians are comforted by the assurance that, "if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a home not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens."

As those who love Christ go to meet him and to dwell with him, the prepared places are ready for them. They do not go to be lost in the crowd, to be lonely over there, to feel that they are strangers in a strange place.

We sometimes shrink, as we say, from going alone. We cannot quite loosen our clasp on hands that we have held, as we think that our friends are to be separated from us. But there will be no loneliness in that place where Christ receives his own. Among the mansions he has made ready a place for every one. He is the Architect who has directed the construction and style and furniture of every mansion. We know what he has done, as it were before our eyes, in preparation of the place. His whole work in this world during the thirty-three years of his humanity was a preparatory work for his people. His life of instruction and miracle entered into it. His sufferings and death, by which he made full atonement for sin, entered into it. His resurrection from the dead and his ascension into glory were a part of it. But this was not all. He began on earth the work which he is carrying on to comple-

tion in heaven. "I go to prepare a place," he said. The preparation is progressing above. As one may see a city, for instance on our frontier land, rising like magic on the banks of a mighty river, street after street extending over the bluffs and out upon the prairie, the sound of the workman's tools ringing in the air from early morning till evening, great warehouses, stately and humble dwellings rapidly multiplying and receiving the incoming immigrants, so that every company and every family is sure to find a place prepared for them, so the city of God has enlargement and fitness, through the ongoing work of the Lord, for the multitudes who come to its hospitable gates from old Christian lands, from churches newly planted on heathen continents and islands of the sea, the ever-growing nations of the redeemed, who are absorbed and made to feel at home among the inhabitants of the blessed country.

Our Lord is equal to his tasks. Not so fast can heaven be filled that he is not ready to receive all who come. His voice is of welcome to every victorious believer. The places are prepared always in advance. By one offering he has opened the new and living way to the house of God. He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. Having, then, a great High Priest who hath passed through the heavens we may have assured confidence in the completeness of his work for us. We are indeed separated here; our families are broken up and beloved friends are parted. But as Joseph went before, and was ready in the mansions of Egypt's capital to greet his father and his brethren and his beloved Benjamin when they arrived there, so will those who have gone on into God's dwelling-place be ready to give glad welcome to those who follow them.

If this aspect of heaven as the city of homes be cherished, we may say that from those dwellings old friends will look forth for those who are expected, doors will be opened by those who have welcomed the new-comers a thousand times before, the voices will have the tone and ring of the old home-life, and the hands that will clasp their hands will be those that have held them and helped them in the love and labor of the earth-life. Your little child, whose solitary going seemed so sad to you, will be taken into arms that will hold it with a caress as loving as your own. Your aged mother, for whom you ministered with a love as constant as the hours, and who clung to the old home to the last, will find a dearer home open to her footsteps and old friends offering to her the cheerful hospitalities of the heavenly world. Your beloved friend, with whom you walked on the long way of earthly service, and whose changeless

love was the one true thing in which you could always confide, will wait through the lingering years for your coming and will introduce you to the dwelling which the Lord has prepared for your re-united life.

We need not hesitate to go. All that we need to dread is what will occur on this side. The weary sickness, the pain of the mortal body, the consuming care of friends, these are the things from which we may shrink. Blessed are they who in the midst of life suddenly lie down in the embrace of death. On that side everything is to be desired. Do travelers hesitate to embark for the homeward voyage? However pleasant may have been the stay in foreign lands, however they may have enjoyed the society of the great and the good abroad, that day is a red-letter day when the ship casts off its cables and turns its prow toward the waiting home-land. Do school-children dread the day that shall end

the term and set their faces toward home and parents and brothers and sisters? Although their fellows may be loved the home-love draws on all their nature, and with shout and song they throw down their books and start on their happy journey.

Heaven is the home-land. More and more it is filling up with our beloved. With kindling eyes and hurrying footsteps and brief farewells, and the words, "Meet us there," they are passing on, upward, within the gates. The blessed mansions are all ready for them.

By the truthfulness of Christ's own word, by the sincerity of his deep affection, by the wonderfulness of his vicarious sacrifice, we may be sure that for us, as for them, that for us with them, if we and they are Christ's, homes are all prepared.

Let us joyfully anticipate the time when we may go. Let us hold lightly by anything

that would tend to hinder us. Let us not dread the messenger who is appointed of God to usher us into immortality. And when, as to many of us it has occurred, the time shall come when those we love shall be called to the heavenly mansions, let us not by our sadness make it hard for them to go, but rather feel that soon, soon, we shall meet them again; that our mournful "good-night" will soon be followed by a cheerful "good morning."

"Yet, kneeling low in darkened homes,
And weeping for the treasure spent,
We bless thee, Lord, for that sweet word
Our dear ones murmured as they went."

VII.

THE CHILDREN OF HEAVEN.

IT fell to the prophet Zechariah to foretell affairs and events in the restored Jerusalem, which to the pious Jew was the type of the city of God. Its desolations had been great and severe. The war-horses of its enemies had pranced in its most sacred places; their hoofs had thundered on the spots where holy altars had stood, and their neighings had rung where the music of voices and instruments had celebrated the praises of Almighty God. The strong walls which had stood as ramparts of defense around the sacred city had been broken, and insolent barbarians had poured through their ragged breaches for rapine and plunder. The homes of the people

had been invaded and sacked. Carnage and lust had done their worst. The surviving citizens had been carried away as captives by the armies of the conquerors, and in strange lands they had found it hard to sing the songs of Zion, and their untuned harps hung desolately upon the willows. Few and melancholy were the inhabitants of the old city that had seen proud days of joy and festivity. Aged men and women were no more seen on its streets nor ascending the mount for holy worship. There were no children within its broken and silent walls; their swift feet were not seen in play; their glad laughter—sweetest of music—was not heard, thrilling wherever it rang; the flash of roguish eyes, the magic of rapturous voices, the waving of graceful hands had passed away like the light of morning, like the perfume and beauty of flowers. So the city sat desolate.

Happy was the seer who could predict its restoration. He saw its walls rising again; its temple lifting its roof of gold and reflecting back the glory of the gilded heavens; its homes once more the habitations of its own people; traffic in its marts again; worship at its rebuilt altars; the coming and going of its population and of strangers; the prosperous fortunes of its citizens; its safety in the midst of surrounding wars; its victories under able chieftainship; a future great and glorious and in happy contrast with the gloom and ruin of its overthrow and desertion. He says, "There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." These were the finest emblems of its restored prosperity and glory. Grandeur than arches of triumph were the hoary heads

of its old men. Richer than the clink of gold and silver on its counters was the ringing laughter of boys and girls on its highways. Every street, he says, of the New Jerusalem shall be full of children; they shall throng at every doorway; pour in the full tide of their exuberant joy up and down the thoroughfares; healthy, strong, quick, bright, they shall be happy in themselves and bring happiness to all who are with them. The city shall be so safe and healthful and peaceful that the streets shall be the play-ground of the boys and girls, whose active sports shall go forward amidst the occupations of the people and the throngs of passing men and women. It is a bright picture of peacefulness and plenteousness. Nothing could represent more strongly or pleasantly the happy state of the restored city. The ring of children's voices is a city's sweetest music. The sports of childhood are the emblem and proof of

prosperity and peace. Where the quick feet of boys and girls quiver in the sunshine and their songs of joy pour forth as from the throats of birds there is order and security and law. Where children are downcast and lonely and silent there is surely decline and degradation and ill-fortune. Zechariah's mission was to awaken the spirit of the dejected people, to arouse them to new hope and new undertakings, to enkindle the glow of true revival in religion, in ecclesiastical life and in national affairs. The holy and beautiful house where their fathers worshipped was to be rebuilt; the name of *Jew* was to be made a name of honor among the nations; victory was to crown the revived people. With others, he set this significant picture before them: "The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." This harmonized with the Hebrew Psalms of restoration and prosperity. Read the 126th,

127th, 128th Psalms, as indicating the Jewish ideas, and see how the poetry throbs with the joy of the return and the blessing of children.

The prophetic commentary of Zechariah upon these Psalms is typical of the future, the heavenly life. The restored Jerusalem is a type of the New Jerusalem. To the pious Jews the prosperities and glories of the City of Zion faintly imaged the magnificence and royalties of the Zion above. Their eyes swept beyond. Above the roofs and domes and walls of the metropolis rose another CITY shining with a more resplendent light, with pinnacles and blazing spires of a loftier architecture, with homes purer and lovelier, with a population more noble and numerous, with songs swelling out with sweeter harmonies, with employments of a higher because of a more spiritual order. There too are streets; but their pavements flash as with burnished gold. Families are there, the reunited and

the blest. And the streets of *that* city "shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." The full, happy, sportive life of childhood enters into the rounded and complete life of heaven.

That there are children in that fair world we may be assured. Heaven is the city of the saints, and the Lord of it has prepared mansions there for the families whose constitution he has appointed here. The family is the earliest and the best institution. It is Edenic. It comes to us from Paradise. It will be restored in the new Paradise. There will be union and recognition and love on high. Those who have been joined in soul-union and have known the mysterious affection that holds their hearts so closely that nothing can break it, that no time, no absence, no distance, no trial, no guilt can altogether destroy it, and who have become at the same time heavenly-minded by their faith

in the heavenly Father, will be brought together in blessed relation after the Sunderings of the earth are over. Here they may be swept apart by the gales of fortune or misfortune; by those whirlwinds that wind into any group with their omnipotent forces, by the kindly currents that float one away from others. But at the end, after the discipline, the handlings, the cross-bearing, whatever it may be, there will be restoration. No more marrying, no more giving in marriage, indeed, simply perpetuation of ties formed; of families; this life running on and over into that life; this life finding its complement, its completeness, in that. Lovers here will be lovers there. The groups that are bound by one affection and are separated from others, not by any repugnance or alienation, but simply by the attraction of their own affection, will be reproduced in heaven. The family life is divine. God setteth the solitary in families.

This life will last. The parent will be parent still. The mother who gave so much of her own life for the life of her child will own the relationship which enfolds mysteriousness and creation in it. The child will be no less her own on other shores, in better scenes, in eternal union. Brother and sister will not be outlawed names on high.

Undoubtedly the children who are taken from our earthly homes, under the provisions of God's everlasting covenant with his people, advance and mature in the life of heaven. They do not remain as they were when they left the world. They will grow, as the Saviour grew, in wisdom and stature and in divine grace. They will gain knowledge and experience and they will become real servants of Him who has redeemed them and given them a place near his throne. We cannot expect to find them, as the years pass on, as we knew them in our earthly relation, any

more than we can expect the children who remain on earth to continue in childhood. They will mature; they will, we may well suppose, attain higher rank than if they had known only the advantages of this world. As the relation of parent and child loses none of its tenderness and sacredness and intimacy in the progress which is made in the earthly life, so will no affection, no blessedness of kinship and tenderest ties, be lost because the children are developed under heavenly influences. We rejoice in the progress and excellent attainments of our children who enjoy the instruction and culture of the university and the advantages of travel and world-acquaintance. So may we be made glad by the advancement and glory which they may gain to whom are awarded the higher culture and the broader acquisitions of heaven. Their progress and power will be for our pride and joy.

If *home* means much here; if it is one of

the few really God-given names, holding in it hopes, memories, sacred passions which survive changes, which keep their brightness and strength through wanderings and colonizations, so that it is always where the heart is and where those whom the heart loves are, its transference to a better world will not destroy it, will only ennoble and transfigure it. It will mean more on that side than it ever meant on this. It will carry with it all that it had here, and it will have added to it all that it will gain there. It will only gain by the transmigration, as the costly metals gain in value and in beauty by the processes which develop them into their own purity and brilliance. You drop the ore, only freckled with shining spots, into the crucible; the black and drossy imposing masses are detached from the genuine metal and are thrown over as waste and useless substance; but below the bright gold trembles in its bil-

lowy beauty and it is poured out and reformed to be wrought on the hilts of jeweled swords and on the coronets of kings! It lay darkly in the earth; it flashes now in the places of supreme authority and in the magic circles of beauty. Through the fire and the furnace of trial and of death, so will the home gain in purity and value as it emerges into the air and the light and the fragrance beyond the skies. It will be fit for the royalties and the splendors of its new estate. It will honor Him who ordained it, who made it the chief jewel of the earth and then fit to shine in the magnificence of his court.

Relations of less significance send their holiest influence into the now unseen life: and heaven is made more attractive by their recognition. Much more will the family hold its own and the home gain and the blessed recognitions come to the divinest relationships.

The home idea *contains the child idea*. A home without children does not fulfill the significance of the term, and a family without them is barren and unblessed. You can remember the enlargement which came with your first child. It was as if treasures had been emptied at your feet; as though the walls of your dwelling had been lifted and broadened; as though by a strange suffrage you had been raised to some place of honor. The world swung in a new atmosphere and the sense of your possession in it was enlarged, as if heirship had fallen to you.

You can remember, too, the deep sense of loss when that life, so pure and sweet, went out. The whole world seemed to have gone with it. All other treasure was as naught. You were confined in your sorrow. Nothing availed but one steady, strong Hand. When that life which was so much to you passed

“Into the eternal shadow
That girts our life around,
Into the infinite silence
Wherewith Death’s shore is bound,”

your heart and your home and the earth itself were empty. You could look upwards only and not around.

Home, to meet its signification, needs the presence of children. Think of that dear child in a home where you often go; full of a most exuberant and joyous life, bounding with a sense of happy freedom, wearing evermore a happy smile on its sunny features, the outward sign of the inner gladness of the soul, laughter brimming in the eyes, grace characterizing every motion, words of sweetness greeting you, words of true and sometimes wonderful meaning revealing the immortal gem in that beautiful casket. Is not that the real treasure and joy of that home? And if some day you should go there to

find silence and loneliness and darkness, you would not need to be told what had come to pass. Your heart would tell. That place would never more be what it had been to you.

Heaven without children would not seem like *home*. A chief element would be lacking to this idea and relation. Those streets must be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. The other relations subsist: childhood also is perpetuated. The home idea necessitates it.

Many children have gone there. So far the majority of those who have begun an earthly life have closed it in infancy. They have been taken from evil. It was a special tenderness for children which our Lord manifested when he was on earth. He took them up in his arms and blessed them. He said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me." He said, "Their angels

do always behold the face of my Father in heaven." He was their Saviour. For the uncounted population whose life here has ended in infancy he was the Saviour. He knew how full heaven was, and was to be, of these first-fruits of his work. The sight of the children of Judea and Galilee reminded him of what had so often interested him in his Father's house. The songs with which the children of Jerusalem greeted his entrance into their city reminded him of that perfected praise which he had heard "out of the mouth of babes and sucklings" near his throne. The children of heaven were dear to him. They were of his redemption. They were under his tuition and training.

Such are the favored ones: the elect children. There is no school like that. There is no tutelage so perfect. It is our loss: it is their gain. They are *ours* still. We give them to Christ. He takes them for his own.

But he keeps them for us. They are safe: they are saved. Whatever may be true of others in the dark risks of life, *these* are beyond peril and their blessed immortality is assured. It is hard to let them go, to release from clasp and enfolding love those who have come to us from the Lord, the Maker, and have so entwined themselves around all the vital members of our being; to feel that we shall see them no more until in the clearer climes they shall welcome us home.

“Day after day we think what they are doing,
In those bright realms of air;
Year after year, their tender steps pursuing,
Behold them grown more fair.
Thus do we walk with them and keep unbroken
The bond which nature gives,
Thinking that our remembrance, though unspoken,
May reach them where they live.”

It were harder to see them on evil ways,
breaking away from our hands and hearts

on courses of sin, so spoiling our lives and theirs and darkening the very heavens over us, which are now so clear and alluring. It were harder also to put in our reluctant and murmuring negation to the will of Him who doeth all things well.

Whether in that large world, in the celestial *cosmos*, there are *new creations of childhood*, holy beginnings of growing life and mind, to be trained in divine knowledge and in perfect character, we may not determine. But it would fall in with the analogy of nature, with what we see of the divine ways, that the creative power should be so employed, and that there should be in the palaces of the King offspring of his omnipotence, successions of living beings richly endowed, who should grow up as children grow: the princes of heaven. Were this so, not our children only would be there; other children also, their companions, pure, blessed asso-

ciates and friends, with whom they would run on those glad ways, with whom they would join in blessed studies, with whom they would know and love the Lord who leads them. Then would the streets of that city be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. God's new creations would fill the happy heaven with joy, and song, and pleasure.

The children of heaven *must be children* still. Place does not alter their nature. The characteristics which are so marked and interesting, which draw to innocent and intelligent and unfolding childhood such regard, remain. It is no offense to good taste or the sense of propriety, or the fitness of things, that the children of heaven should be what we know children are; that their employments should be those that accord with the mental and moral qualities of childhood; and that, therefore, in that world, pure and

holy and glorious as it is, there should be the enjoyments and pleasures which belong to full young merry life, and that those blessed streets should be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. Our children who go there go not to gloom, nor stateliness: they are not grown-up children; and they find there what they want—the things and pleasures which fully satisfy them. God is their Father. He, who has filled His creations as full of play as of work, who has poured around the world the dancing sunlight, and covered two-thirds of it with the leaping water, and crowded its atmosphere with sportive and singing birds and insects, and made the morning glad with music and the evening sweet with vespers, rejoices in the gladness and play of children and gives them room in heaven for their fine and free indulgence.

Let us not wish them back to whom has

been allotted the privilege of going on before and going early. They would not wish to come back, nor should we wish to have them if once our veiled eyes could look in upon those crowded streets, if our dulled ears could hear now their ringing voices. We may long for them but not lament them. Our hearts may go thitherward: their steps may not come hitherward. Nor let us darken the pure sunlight of the Lamb in which they play, nor awaken a sorrow in their happy souls, by the knowledge that we lament their loss. Let the word they get from us, from time to time, be that we treasure their love as a most precious thing in our hearts, that the thought of them lifts our aspiration higher and makes our step quicker toward their home and ours. The way is not so long; the end is not so very far. Sooner than we think the flashing pinnacles will lift their lighted spires before us; the jeweled gates will swing in-

ward for our entrance; songs like those of welcome will fill all the air with music; and the white hands within that will be the first to clasp us, and the loving arms that with rapture will be the first to enfold us in their embrace, will be of those who at the call of God went on before that they might give us welcome to the heavenly palaces.

VIII.

*DIFFERENT DEGREES OF HEAVENLY
REWARD.*

IT is to be feared that many of those who consider themselves to be on the way to heaven rest in a kind of vague and dreamy view of that blessed world, overlooking the fact, which is clearly revealed in the Scriptures, that the celestial happiness is something which is to be gained, something indeed which, in a sense, is to be earned, and that the degree of each one's blessedness there depends upon the measure of each one's holiness here. It is no more true that the standing of the student who enters the university or the high school is affected by the carefulness and thoroughness of his preparation in the lower grades of study, it is no more true

that the station of men, the rank they hold or the position they fill, is determined by the diligence and success with which they have fitted themselves for their professional calling or their manual handicraft, than it is true that the relative place in heaven and the relative happiness of each soul there will be accurately qualified by the life of this world, by the service which each one has rendered to the Master—always in subordination to the sovereign good pleasure of God in bestowing natural endowments, special grace, and time and opportunities of service.

The heavenly life is not so different from the earthly life that the philosophy of the human mind is extinguished by the change of state. That which holds good in all ethical principles and in all mental philosophy on this side of the line holds equally good on that side of the line. It is one and the same man who lives here and who lives there.

Crossing the sea does not revolutionize characters. Crossing the narrow stream of death makes no more revolution. Men are fitting themselves to be what they will be, whether in New York or in the new heavens.

It is this, as I look at it, which gives an incomparable significance to the Christian life. It is this which summons every disciple of Christ to a constant watchfulness and a strenuous service. It is this which puts meaning into every organization and every effort of Christian endeavor. It is this which makes it so much of an object to begin early and to strive unweariedly to follow Christ. There are many motives which persuade one to the service of Christ; this is one which has the stamp of eternity on it. Christ has gone into the highest heavens, our forerunner there, and they will come nearest to him, will see most of him and become most like him, who shall have served him long-

est, and most faithfully and successfully, on earth.

When I see how men compete for the prizes of this world—when I see how much of diligent toil the student puts into the tasks of the curriculum that he may carry off the honors of the university; how much of muscular practice the athlete devotes to the training of the corporal man that he may gain the race or the game; how much of intense application, how much of pecuniary outlay and of personal sacrifice men will freely give that they may attain posts of influence and of power, that they may achieve political ends, that they may be successful in literature or art, that they may stand among the moneyed kings of the world, that they may command the suffrages of obliged peoples and wear the recognized crowns of authority, and have, in one department or another of human society, *leadership*—I think how much stronger

the appeal is to all the noblest ambitions and aspirations of any immortal man to fit himself for a high place in heaven; to covet a crown that shall never fade; to become the possessor of bliss that shall not pall on the senses, that shall only grow purer and sweeter the longer it is enjoyed; in a word, to become prepared as fully as possible for the higher degrees of those rewards which God is graciously pleased to bestow upon his people.

It may be thought, it may be felt, especially by those who are languid and inefficient and who do not like any spiritual exertion, and as well by those who are worldly and do not relish very much of religion, that *any place*, the lowest place even, in a world like that, is all-sufficient and should satisfy the longings of any soul. Undoubtedly, any place, the lowest place, there is a thing to be grateful for, and is all that worldly and indifferent persons can expect to reach, and is

more than any one will merit ; but the eminent rewards should appeal to the diligence and fidelity and aspiration of all who hold heaven high, and would, here and hereafter, live near to Christ.

The fact of the different degrees of the heavenly rewards is conditioned on reason and the nature of things, as also on the wisdom of God : it is both philosophical and Scriptural. Objection is sometimes made to it on the ground that *God is not partial* in the bestowal of rewards, that he loves all his people alike, that they share equally in the provisions of grace in the Father's house, and that salvation and the results of it are not of merit but are of unmerited grace. These points will appear in their true light as we consider the central principle of this chapter.

The analogy between the present state of good men and their future state would indicate different degrees of happiness hereafter.

The enjoyment of Christians in the religious life now vastly varies. Some find constant and almost unalloyed joy in the service of Christ. Their habitual feeling mounts almost to enthusiasm in the duties of religion. With joy do they draw water out of the wells of salvation.

Others are in a settled peace of mind, without excitement and without depression. Others still walk in the gloom; fears mingle with their hopes: sorrow is the woof if joy is the web in the weaving of life; like Naomi, they say, "Call me Mara." Yet all these are children of the same Father and share in his love; they are heirs of the same covenant and believers of the same promises, and they are destined to an inheritance purchased for them by the same blood. The degree of their present enjoyment is different now; and this suggests that it will be different hereafter. Although sorrow and gloom will be absent in

the world of light, the amount of blessedness will be unlike in exact analogy with the experience of this world.

Also, the *differing capacities* of minds qualify them for diverse rewards. Men are not made alike. As no two faces are alike, so no two minds are alike. Men are made for what they are to be, made to fulfill God's purposes. God's creative power produces multitudinous variety. The leaves on the same tree vary and the myriad blooms of one plant are somewhat unlike. Mental capacities are of manifold grades. Some minds will hold more than others, and so their experiences, whether of sorrow or of joy, will be diverse. But such as we are such shall we be. We shall shuffle off this mortal coil, but the interior principle, that which preëminently makes man what he is, will remain the same in the future as it is now. Each man shall carry his own individuality with him in what-

ever world he may live. That cannot be laid aside as the body is laid aside. There is no escape from it. It cannot be changed as habits are changed. Habits are the mind's clothes; but the mind retains its personality. As we are now, as we leave this world, so, relatively, in the powers and capacities of our minds shall we be in the future world. The new creation does not conform all minds to one standard; no more will the entrance into heaven. Paul and those whom he led to Christ were vastly unlike. Paul is the same man in heaven that he was in Rome or at Athens. The disciples in whose conversion he rejoiced are the same also. But Paul with his great capacity for happiness, with the profound discipline which his apostleship gave him, with the consecrated character which he so largely developed, is capable of untold blessedness beyond that of his immature converts. Nothing that is gained in this world

is lost. Christian knowledge is the preparation for heavenly knowledge. Attainments now made in holiness will fit one for association with holy beings and for engagement in holy pursuits and for the enjoyment of holy pleasures in heaven. The more one has become conformed to God, to his will and his image, through the varied disciplines of human life, through sorrow and loneliness and the discharge of duty and the joy of self-denial and the peace of cross-bearing, the larger will be his capabilities for the bliss of the skies, the nearer will he stand to the throne, and the nobler will be his start for the heavenly acquisitions.

The degree of the reward will depend upon the capacity for the reward. The capacity will vary as the individuals vary. There will be endless variety to the rewards in heaven. Rank on rank the redeemed shall surround the throne of their King; crowns

shall gleam with differing splendor; tones of harps shall swell with varying melody; but through all these concentric circles one tide of joy shall flow—fuller to those who are nearer the throne, but all that they can hold to those who are more remote from it—triumphant and glad and grateful in its song-burst to Him who has redeemed them and made them kings and priests unto God.

Then too the *natural product* of religion in this life results in differing rewards in the life to come. We are not living now merely for this world. Whether we think of it or not—and we do not think enough of it—this life, with all that we garner in it, goes over into the next life. The blessedness of heaven *consists* of the feelings and experiences which belong to the holy soul in any possible condition of its existence. There is nothing conventional or forced about it. Souls are not made happy in heaven whether they will

it or not. They are happy because it belongs to them to be so. "The mind is its own place; and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven." Real joy springs from within the mind itself rather than from exciting conditions without; as the sweetest perennial fountain is that which is fed from subterranean sources rather than from surface showers.

That Christian who has been made strong by what he has gone through, into the very composition of whose being the matchless graces of the Spirit have been wrought, will find his reward wherever he may be placed. The dungeon at Philippi rang with the praises of God. The martyr-soul at the stake flamed with the visions of heaven. Our dead have left us with sweetest farewells, the joy of the Lord overpassing the pains of departure and dissolution. And so the eminent Christian will store the speedier and the larger harvests in the heavenly garner. Memory will bring

to one mind much more of reward than it can bring to another, as it goes back over a track of light, of moral beauty, of religious endeavor and success. Estimate, too, the joy which, in the renewal of old friendships in heaven, shall come to one as they meet and greet him who by his fidelity were led to Christ, and so to heaven, which otherwise they would not have enjoyed. The social life of heaven, so far as it shall be a continuance of that of this world, will contribute to different degrees of future reward.

Further, God will express *his approbation* of eminent and steadfast holiness by the bestowal of high rewards. The rewards of heaven are not those only which are the natural product of piety; they are conferred in part directly by the Redeemer. It is his prerogative to allot blessedness to those who have been faithful to him. True it is that none *merit* any reward; in one view, all are

unprofitable servants, and have done only that which was their duty to do. But when God announces his purpose to reward each one according to his own labor we feel that the divine wisdom is in it, and that it is altogether worthy of him so to express his approval of those who have most glorified him in strenuous service. An inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, is to be distributed among the heirs of God. Some shall come into large possessions. Among the crowns there are some of surpassing brilliance. Among the harps there are some of most melodious tone. Among the thrones and mansions there are some more superb than others. No one will wish to supplant the twelve apostles, whose twelve thrones will be luminous among the seats of honor in heaven. There will be no envy of those who, having suffered martyrdom for the name of Jesus, shall wear on their heads

the gemmed diadems of the kingdom. All will feel that it is fit that St. Paul, who counted not his life dear to himself for the love he bore to Christ, shall be honored above the thief who repented on the cross. Those self-sacrificing servants of our Lord who gave up home, and all most dear, that they might carry forth his gospel, will be gladly accorded their hundred-fold reward in this life and in that which is to come. Every soul will rejoice in the promotion of the humble disciple who was unknown and unhonored of men but who suffered in obscurity for the Master, as he takes his place in the beautiful abode which Christ's own hand has made ready for him. The relative worth and rank of all shall be made manifest as each shall receive his own reward according to his own labor.

It is well to consider also that this principle is a *revelation of Scripture*. The great

Biblical law, whose application runs through all life, is that men shall reap as they have sown. He who sows sparingly shall reap also sparingly : he who sows bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Glory, honor and peace shall be given to the good workers. Some are saved so as by fire: to others an abundant entrance is administered into the kingdom. As one star differeth from another star in glory, so shall it be with those who are glorified in heaven. We read of the "righteous man's reward," and of the "prophet's reward," as though each one had his specific reward. Some shall receive twenty fold, some fifty fold, some one hundred fold for their distinguished services. All are to receive according to the deeds done in the body. Many who are first in human judgment shall be last in the judgment of God. Many who are last among men shall be first in the regard of God. Small and nameless stars, whose rays

were scarcely recognized on earth, shall wax in size and splendor until they shall far outshine the suns that dazzled us in time. The lowly Christian who toiled in faithfulness and turned many to righteousness shall far outrank those whose religion was of formal services as for Christ. In the parable of the Talents the Lord delivered "to each according to his several ability." According to their fidelity in the use of them was their reward. So also in the parable of the Pounds, when each servant received one pound: he who made ten pounds was given authority over ten cities, and he who made five pounds was given authority over five cities. The parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard does not conflict with this. They commenced work, some in the morning, some at noon, some later still, and at night "they received every man a shilling." This parable teaches that men are not to dictate to God what

they shall receive ; that he gives to each one that which he has promised to give. It is not always that the *longest* labor will have the largest reward. Quality is of more significance than quantity. But each shall receive his own reward.

In what *manner* the heavenly rewards are to be bestowed can be only approximately conjectured from what the Scriptures incidentally state. In the sublime argument of the apostle for the resurrection, where his periods glow as in the rhythm and march of a lofty lyric, he uses the significant phrase, "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars ; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead." As the bodies of the pious dead come forth from their graves to be gifted with strength and beauty and immortality and glory, God, in their new construction and

constitution, may confer peculiar honor on those who have been most devoted to him, and may make the glorified bodies of his people the perpetual witnesses of his distinctive rewards.

Old prophecy asserted, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." In the visions of the Apocalypse the redeemed are represented as surrounding the throne of the Almighty and as permitted to come near to him. Now, to come near to royalty is a mark of honor. Nearest in the circles of the glorified, as they adore the King, may be those who are accounted most faithful. They shall behold more of the brightness of the divine glory; shall learn more of the deep things of God; shall receive more of the divine favors.

In the vast kingdom one who has been of

eminent service shall have authority over ten cities. In manifold modes, evidently, God can reward his servants.

If it be so, that each one is to receive, in the Biblical phrase, his own reward according to his own labor, each one should be stimulated to begin early and to continue faithfully to serve Christ. So may we gain a glory and a blessedness that shall be our incomputable reward. Bearing the cross with humility and courage, standing forth for the beloved Master in every place, in the warring rivalries of the world ranking ourselves evermore on the side of the dear Redeemer, putting forth in every way the generous exertions of Christian endeavor, there shall be no dispute of the crown that we shall wear, of the fine authority that shall be our investiture, of the reward that God's own hand shall give us, of the love and the glory that shall make our eternity bright and blessed.

IX.

*SURPRISE AT THE HEAVENLY
REWARDS.*

THE introduction to the heavenly life must be full of peculiar surprises. Transference from a world like this to a world like that states, in its own terms, a change unlike any other. The citizen of a land like ours, passing over the seas to the old historic lands, is possessed with wonder at the strange sights that burst upon his vision. He stands in Trafalgar Square, with the monuments of London's old civilization around him; memorials of great men whose undying fame survives them; buildings devoted to art and legislation and worship; the towers of the Parliament

House, representing the glory of the empire: the gray towers of the majestic Abbey, monumental of the religious reverence of a great people: representatives of all nationalities bringing the tributes of submission and loyalty to the world's mightiest capital: and it is as though a new world opened to him. On one day he opens his eyes in a city like Antwerp, where the novelty of every sight is a marvel, the Hotel de Ville recalling the burgomasters and judges and citizens of ancient days, the Cathedral full of glory within and, without, pointing with its wonderful spire to the glory beyond: and the amazement takes his breath away and he hardly knows whether he is in the body or out of the body.

But this experience is a feeble likeness of the astonishment which will fill one to whom it is permitted to enter heaven. Paris and Rome, Jerusalem and Calcutta, are all earthly

cities: and while there is much in them that may be foreign to our thought and habit they yet have some resemblance to our own; each one is the metropolis of men. Heaven is the *metropolis of God*. It is the residence of angels. Its antiquity is eternal. Its wealth is infinite. The architecture of the City of God is unlike anything of human design. Its throne is of dazzling glory. Light, unlike the shining and the flames that blaze over the earth, the light of the divine glory, illumines it. Its residents are pure spirits. They, then, who are transferred from this world to that world will be filled with strange surprise. It will be all new and wonderful and glorious.

The change from the doubt and fear, which many carried through their earthly life, to the certainty of their salvation will contribute to this surprise. It is a patent fact, and one which is not difficult to explain, that many Christians, many excellent Christians even,

many of whose salvation others are confident, are all their life-time subject to bondage of doubt and fear in respect to their acceptance with Christ. They have no doubt of their sincere repentance and faith; they know that they truly love the Saviour who has died for them. But they fail to accept and appropriate the promises for themselves. They have hope, but fear is mingled with it. They have peace, but doubt crowds in upon it. The region through which they journey is not all light. Mists float in upon it and clouds hang gloomily over it. At times they rise to a mount of vision and get a sweep of landscapes and a sight of skies which are full of loveliness and gladness for them. Then they descend into the valley where the fogs lie low and heavy. So there is an alternation of experience which reduces the reward of faith and the fulfillment of the promises. Ask them if they are Christians, and their answer

betrays their wavering conviction. Ask them if they are without hope, and silently they shudder at the bewildering and repellent thought. Often it is the most reverent and trusting disciple who is the most harassed with troublesome suspicion of himself. The over-bold cannot be the most trusted in trial and peril. It was Peter who would not deny the Lord though he should die with Him. Yet the remark of a simple maid threw him off his balance, and on the night when his Lord was crucified he cursed, and swore that he did not know Him. In the days of persecution, when faith was brought to the test of flame and sword and beast, it was the timid and distrustful disciples often who went in holy courage to torture and to death, choosing to dare and suffer all things rather than to deny him who was their soul's confidence and joy. Distrust, if it is to be of one's self, of one's own goodness or ability, so that it be united

to a strong reliance on Christ, is a virtue rather than a fault, a defense rather than a weakness. But it will be a surpassing surprise to those who while they were on the journey hardly dared to hope that they should attain to any reward, who lived in fear and possibly died in fear, to find themselves owned and honored of Christ and admitted to the full satisfaction of the heavenly state. It will be a delightful release from the solicitude of the present to enter on the frontier of a future so blessed, to know that heaven, after all, is gained. It will be a glad exchange, the world of trial for the world of holiness, the body of death for the glorified body of the saved, earthly anxieties and gloom for undisturbed peace and security.

The trembling disciple who hardly dared look upward, who could only smite upon the breast and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" will find himself near the throne and

his glad utterance will be, "Glory to God in the highest!" The lowly handmaid of the Lord who bore affliction as the chastening which her truant soul needed, and who never ceased to fear that she should come short of the glory to which she faintly looked, will sing the song of gratitude for her easy victory through Christ. And many who bore the lot of tribulation will be filled with overmastering surprise that they have reached the fair home that they longed for, and have seen the King in his beauty to whom their souls were loyal. Can it be, they will say, that we are indeed here? Can it be that our wayward feet indeed stand on these eternal heights, that our worldly voices are lifted in those heavenly songs, that our dubious battle has eventuated in such glorious victory, that we are certainly in the presence and the home of Him who dwelleth in light unapproachable?

Surprise will be occasioned by the consciousness of the redeemed that they did *not merit* such reward. As they look back upon their lives, as they review the deeds done in the body, they will feel that the retrospect is unsatisfying; that there has been a poverty of achievement, a superfluity of neglect and unbelief, an inconsistency of practice, which merit reproof rather than reward. As they realize that they are indeed with Christ and that they behold his glory, that they are with the loyal angels whose greatest gratification has been to be true to their King, that they are with Abraham, and Moses, and David, and Isaiah, and John, and Polycarp, and Luther, and Edwards, and Livingstone, and Brainerd, and the great company of faithful ones of whom the world was not worthy, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the glorious company of the apostles, the noble army of martyrs, the holy church which throughout

the ages has worthily upheld the Name that is above every name, they will feel humbled and astonished that such as they can be thought fit to appear there. What have we done, they will ask, to deserve all this? The answer in their souls will be that it is not on account of any merit of their own that they are so honored by the Son of God. Nothing in their lives gives them a title to emoluments and blessedness of such exalted character. "My life," will one and another say, "even after I professed to be the servant of Christ, was a poor equivalent for what he had done for me. It looks now like a long series of neglects, of ingratitude and murmuring and excuses from duty. My torpid resolutions of fidelity yielded in the temptations of the world. My vows of obedience were like tow in flame. I stood in the church, but my heart was in the world. Verily, I was an unprofitable servant, and I deserve no reward.

“But what do I see? I am among the redeemed from every nation and all the ages, those whose names I revered, whose characters I admired. I am in the presence of Christ and I look upon his beloved face, and he looks upon me with a tenderness which characterized all his life on earth, as though I indeed am his. It is almost too much to believe: yet it is, it must be, true. I, unworthy, sinful, am saved. Prodigal as I was, unfit to be even a servant in the Father’s house, I am honored as a son and an heir. I did not think of this; I did not live for it. My wonder and my praise will ever be that I am a sinner saved by grace.”

Such shall be the feeling of the holiest of the redeemed. St. Paul, filled as his apostleship was with continuous service, energetic and untiring even unto death as was his consecration to the Master, whose he was and whom he served, will be sensible that there

was nothing in his life to merit such reward; that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that hath mercy; and evermore his confession will be, "By the grace of God I am what I am." Abraham and Isaiah and John will have the same surprise from the consciousness of their own want of merit of such heavenly rewards. All the redeemed will acknowledge that they have come far short of that which it was their duty to do. Yet things which eye saw not and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, hath God prepared for them that love him.

The future surprise will spring from the knowledge of the *occasion* of the reward. Since the Lord went back to his waiting throne invested with the body which he wore on earth he has sustained a peculiar relation to suffering humanity, especially to his suffering friends. He was despised and rejected of

men; a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He was poor and had not where to lay his head. Now those who love him, who are poor and sad and lonely and heavy-laden, are objects of his regard. He feels for them an undisguised sympathy. He is not ashamed to call them brethren. In all their distress he is distressed. On his throne he does not forget them. Still, as in the flesh, he is moved with compassion for them. For them he has gone to prepare a place; and he purposes to make them joint heirs with himself in the inheritance of his mediatorship; to give them kingship and priesthood in that kingdom which will belong to him as Redeemer. They who come out of the great tribulation are they who are before the throne and over whom He that sitteth on the throne shall spread his tabernacle. "God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes." So it is that every act of kindness and love

shown to them he regards as shown to himself; and all such acts become the occasion of the surprising rewards of heaven. The poor and suffering disciples are the representatives of the despised and bruised Christ. Through them his heart is reached. Little favors to them are treasured and remembered by the Lord. The cup of cold water given to a thirsty disciple, in his name, is in effect given to him. The bread passed to the famishing is as bread of which the Master partook at your hand. The shelter which was given to one who was chilled and homeless is hospitality to the Beloved, who knocketh, whose head is filled with dew and his locks with the drops of the night; not to an angel unawares but to the Lord of angels himself. It is permitted to you, from your abundance, to clothe the naked and to prepare them for the house of worship; to watch by the bed of pain and by your gentle ministry to waken

hope which was well-nigh dead, confidence which had faded out, memory and gratitude and joy in the enfeebled mind ; to cheer the wretched prisoner in his gloomy dungeon with words of comfort and with the hope of deliverance. You did not know it, but it was the Christ whom your bounty clothed and fed and whom your sympathy cheered. You may forget it : he will not forget it. The forgiveness which you gave to one who had wronged you, who, once your friend, had turned to be your enemy, is accepted as proof that you too would be forgiven by the Lord.

You did not think that these things which had passed out of your mind would meet you in the reckonings of the judgment and would prove to be the arbitrament of your destiny. But here they are, to your surprise and eternal wonder ! “ Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye

did it unto me." Eternal life is the bestowed reward!

This surprise will arise from the *revelation* of the rewards themselves. We speak of them as though we knew something of them. We use the Scripture terms, but they have a meaning deeper than the definitions of our speech. We look that way, but our eyes have not the telescopic power that we need. We listen, but our ears can only catch the outer wave of blessed melody. We give thought free sweep, but the glorious reality mocks our thought. We *can* know but little of a life so far removed in its spirituality and its blessedness from ours. The Scriptures set it before us in language as well adapted to our present comprehension as any. They speak of the duration and the perfection and the glory of the reward. They speak of a place delightful with light and wealth and beauty and full happiness. They tell us of a city splendid in

its architecture and its throne and its streets and streams and living trees; grand beyond any earthly metropolis. They give us the idea of life free from sorrows and suffering and separation, satisfying in its pleasures and its society and its knowledge and its sublime progress. And they state, beyond all this, that God's own hand bestows positive blessings upon his redeemed children. After all, it is only the revelation itself that will set it forth. And that revelation, from its beginning, through its endless continuance, will be full of wonder. Visions of loveliness, songs of melody, blessed fellowship, the sight of God, service satisfying, all this at the beginning, with unending prospects of wider knowledge and richer experience, in which new revelations shall break upon the soul, shall define and continue and augment the blessed surprises. Unceasingly heaven shall grow more dear, God more glorious, the Re-

deemer more beloved, every pleasure and pursuit more delightful, every soul more blessed. The growing revelation of the surpassing greatness and sweetness of the rewards shall constantly augment the surprise. And never, in all the growth of the saved, in all their progress upward, from the glad time that they cross the threshold till they stand near the throne, while they become more and more like God, will the surpassing and surprising revelation, beyond all that they could have imagined, ever come to an end!

Now, our life is here : but here and now it may be a life preparatory to the full and satisfying life beyond. We have not indeed the Saviour in person with us, but we have those who represent him and are dear to him. We cannot draw water from the well of Samaria for him who sat weary on its rocky curb. We cannot give bread to him who, in his earthly mission, fasted so much that he

might overcome the tempter and achieve our salvation. We cannot invite to our dwelling One who, though the foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests, had not where to lay his head. We cannot, like the dear women of Galilee, minister to him of our substance as he goes about through cities and villages preaching and bringing the good tidings of the kingdom of God. We cannot watch and pray with him in Gethsemane as the mighty agony of his redemptive work over-masters his soul. We cannot be honored, as was Simon the Cyrenian, to lift up the heavy cross from the bowed and sinking frame of Him who was led as a lamb to the slaughter. We cannot follow him on the mournful path to Golgotha with that great multitude of the people and of women who bewailed and lamented him. We cannot stand by the cross with his dear mother and his mother's sister and the other stricken

disciples in tender and mournful sympathy for our divine Sufferer.

But his poor we have always with us. His suffering and burdened disciples are here. What we do for them shall not lose its reward. If we love one another he will reckon it as love for himself. If we bear the crosses of our brethren it is as though we bore his cross. By tender sympathy, by generous magnanimity, by helpful charity, we may fulfill the law of Christ. So we may live in growing preparation for our heavenly reward, when the unseen things shall be revealed in unanticipated wonder and joy!

X.

RECOGNITION OF FRIENDS IN HEAVEN.

THERE are those who object to the fact of the recognition of friends in heaven. They believe in the recognition of friends in Europe; they believe in knowing those from whom they have been parted on earth, but whom they meet after years of separation have wrought phenomenal changes in their bodily appearance and in their mental stature; they have recognized old classmates who have drifted away from them on the tides which are bearing one man in one direction and another man in another direction, but who have at length returned to the *alma mater* very different men in their age from what they were in the flush and buoy-

ancy of youth, but they have the idea that they will not know a single old friend in heaven! St. Paul did not have that idea. He could not have instructed his friends to be comforted by the words he had given them if he had advanced to them nothing more consoling than the blank and chilling hypothesis that the saint who enters the gate of pearl will find himself lonely and friendless in that home of redeemed men.

The objectors claim that the bodies of the saints will be so entirely changed that recognition will be impossible. Instead of material bodies they will have spiritual bodies; and how can we discern persons in spiritual bodies? they ask. But will not the spiritual body even more fitly than the earthly enable us to recognize the soul we so well know? Will not the spiritual discernment recognize the person just as easily in the spiritual body as the material eye would recog-

nize the person in the material body? Besides, recognition is not through the external form solely. Blind men know each other. Friends discern one another in the dark. We know our friends though a screen may divide us from them. There is mental recognition. There is mental communion with those who are far from us. By a new introduction we come to the knowledge again of those whom we had forgotten.

Our contention has nothing to do with the *mode*, but with the *fact* only. The mode is a heavenly one, and perhaps we may not fully grasp it now: it is not necessary that we should.

It is objected that the human relationships cease with this life; as Christ said, that in heaven they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels: and that as these relationships are ended the love and friendship that went with them will

cease. This does not follow. The marriage state will not be renewed, but the love that existed when persons were in that state will remain. Married persons may here be separated, one may die early, the other live to old age, but the love lasts, pure, strong, tender, beautiful, as the years wax and go. You cannot think that she who was a "widow indeed," and who cherished in undecaying memory the husband of her youth through the long and lonely years of her waiting, to whom every memorial of the true man grew more sacred, who kept embalmed in her memory all his kindnesses and sacrifices, whose life was transfigured by the recollection of joys that are past and by anticipations of joys that are to come, will, all at once, by passing into a new room of the Father's house, forget everything that has been so precious and cherished. You cannot think that he who won the hand and the heart of one who became to

him more than his own self—who through the changes of their brief life found in her a friend who never changed, standing by him in the sweet loyalty of a devoted soul, suffering more than he suffered in every pain he bore, watching with unflagging interest every step of his progress, every event that helped or retarded him; and who, when she went away alone, stood mute and broken by the ashes of their household fellowship, recalling every word she had spoken and every act she had done and every ministry with which she had blessed him in her forgetfulness of herself and in her longing for his love; and who, it may be, had wrought her biography into poetic memorial, in which every scene and every expression and every sacrament glowed with the intensity of a passion which death had only sublimated and hallowed—will, in what may be new conditions indeed, but conditions only more refined and blessed, forget forever

all that has made him what he is and has tended to prepare him for what he eternally will be. The earthly and bodily relation may not indeed be perpetuated; but the mental and spiritual relation, which is the noblest and purest element in our affection, will remain and will be matured and will add to the bliss and fellowship of heaven. The most blessed friendship in this world is that which springs from exalted sentiments, from heavenly aspirations, from joys and hopes that are eternal; and these are the very conditions of heavenly friendship.

Objection is also made that if there shall be the recognition of friends in heaven there will also be the sad consciousness that other friends are absent, and that the happiness of heaven would thus be made imperfect. We must acknowledge that the absence of beloved friends from the heavenly society would be in itself painful. It is a mournful thought now

that some of our dearest friends are not with us in the faith of Christ, are not with us on the journey home. As we are made sorrowful now by this fact so might we well be in heaven, especially if we shall carry to that world the consciousness that we did not do all we could for their salvation, by correct example, by faithful prayer, by personal influence. We must acknowledge that there are conditions of unhappiness in that.

On the other hand, there is a philosophical fact which is important in this connection; viz., that the mind can be so filled with blessedness from one source as to be unmindful of misery from another source. The martyr in the midst of flaming fagots will sing the Christian songs of triumph; will die, in what we should consider agony, with voices of blessing on his burning lips! It was this principle which enabled the apostle to say, "As dying, and behold we live; as sor-

rowful, yet always rejoicing." The saints in heaven will have perfect confidence in God, will recognize the fact that even his severe judgments are true and righteous altogether. They will be perfectly blessed from the sources of blessing which will be full and perfect, and they will not be occupied with the occasions of sorrow.

Besides, the affection which was only of the world, which was not hallowed and made strong by the love of the Saviour, will lose its power. We know how it is in this world. We had a friend in whom we confided, but who proved himself unworthy, dishonorable, and we turned away from him disappointed, and we let him pass out of our thoughts and forgot him. Love, the love that lasts, the love which is of the heavenly life, must be loftier than merely worldly love. It must be grounded in helpfulness of one another toward Christ and heaven, in personal union to

the Redeemer, in fitness for fellowship in all that is great and glorious with God.

Such are the objections to this precious truth ; as we consider them they do not appear to have much weight.

Let us look at it in *the light of reason*. There are no facts which indicate to us that the human mind is changed in its faculties or powers by death. Men go to the very moment of death exactly as we have always known them. They have the same feelings, the same thoughts, the same purposes. The body may be essentially changed ; the mind is not touched nor altered.

Death removes the mind from one environment to another. It passes, as we may say, into another room. But its faculties are unimpaired. It is not consistent with sound reason to suppose that the unchanged soul will not be employed as it was wont to be employed ; that it will not retain its former

nature and character. There will be the old intelligence and the old susceptibilities. There will be meditation on the same themes and gratification with the same objects. No knowledge, no habits, will be lost by the mere change of state. It will be affected by going to heaven, as it would be affected by going to Europe. Across the sea are strange, grand scenes: civilization that is old; memorials of eventful history; battle-fields on which the world's fate hung; cathedrals vocal with the worship of a thousand years; libraries holding the treasures of nations' best thought; homes with the associations of many generations. But it is the same mind, in the use of the same powers, that finds delight in the contemplation of England's glory and Switzerland's scenery and Italy's renowned art and entrancing landscapes, which used to be employed in the studies and business of the home-land.

We pass into a land of greater glory and higher renown and nobler society, where the gates are said to be of pearl and the streets are of gold and the throne is of a brightness too dazzling for human sight, and where angels are the loyal inhabitants, and where the eternal Christ reveals himself in tender love to those whom he has ransomed. We go there with the members of our family, with the friends to whom we have given our unchanging love, with those whom we have helped to the Saviour, with whom we have sung the songs of the waiting church, with whom we have shared the joys and sorrows of the earthly life, with whom we have borne the burdens of Christian service and enjoyed the pure rewards of Christian sacrifice, with whom in many praises and many prayers we have anticipated the heavenly life. The husband and the wife will go there together; not to be married again, but to be glad that they

were once married, and to be more glad that they were married to Christ by faith in bonds that are eternal. The brother and sister will go there together, carrying the memories of their pleasant home-life and rejoicing in the acquisition of their better and eternal home. Friends whose devotion was proved in the trials of the earth-life, who helped each other on through temptations to victory by faith in the precious Saviour, will go there together and will renew their friendship, which was for a time interrupted in expression but which lived in recollection. All these will recognize each other. It does not stand to reason that they should not. Their love and friendship were for this very thing. One of the most touching sentiments of this life is that which finds expression, when one friend is leaving another, in the words, "Meet me in heaven!" It is the spontaneous decision of the mind that the blessed meeting is to come.

And, moreover, before the bar of reason there is an appropriateness to this recognition. There is a longing for it, there is an anticipation of it, and there is also a fitness in it. I have heard it, many have heard it from their dying friends, that it was pleasant to think that they should soon be with one and another whom they named, who had been of their family circle here; that they were soon to be reunited to those who had gone on before them to the blessed home. It is a consolation to every dying believer whose mind is clear that the joyful reunions are at hand. No traveler returning to his native land from long absence abroad anticipates with keener delight the meeting with his family and friends than does the Christian anticipate the restorations of heaven. He says, "I shall meet there those who have been separated from me, but for whom I have longed. Will not this one (whom he

names) be the first to give me welcome to our happy home?" Sometimes faces of friends look out from the mystic realms with the old expression; and sometimes voices, familiar and dear, are heard speaking the words of anticipatory joy. Poetry, the language of the heart, says,

"She is not dead, the child of our affection,
But gone unto that school
Where she no longer needs our poor protection,
And Christ himself doth rule.
Not as a child shall we again behold her :
For when with raptures wild
In our embraces we again enfold her,
She will not be a child ;
But a fair maiden, in her Father's mansion,
Clothed with celestial grace :
And beautiful with all the soul's expansion
Shall we behold her face."

"Cicero could say with approbation that even heaven would not be a place of happiness without some kindred, social spirit to share with him in the great truths there to

be discovered." *Si quis in Cœlum ascendisset naturamque mundi*, etc.

Most appropriate companions for each other are those who have been ransomed by the same blood, who have worked together for the redemption of the world, who have helped each other, by good service, toward the fruitions of the kingdom. It will be delightful to know the blessed angels, those elder children of our Father: it will be delightful to know Abraham, and Paul, and Luther, and the faithful confessors of every age; but the keenest pleasure will be in the restored love of those who were our dearest earthly friends. Next to Christ will be our companions. Our closest sympathies will be with them. No soul will be a stranger in heaven; there are no foreign parts in that world; all its inhabitants will dwell in harmonious intercourse, and eternity will be long enough for the formation of numberless

friendships; yet it is fair to assume that those who prayed, and toiled, and suffered, and rejoiced together, who have common memories, who owe to one another the fact that they are in heaven, will have peculiar pleasure in each other's society. It does not, then, appear that our doctrine can be controverted on the basis of reason. The presumption is in its favor.

But, more than that, it is *supported by the Scriptures*.

When the Lord shall come again those who are alive shall be caught up with those who are raised from the dead to meet him in the air. Right from earthly homes and pursuits some are to be taken to the heavenly mansions, where they will be with their friends who died before them. Such is the inspired teaching. In an Epistle the apostle tells his beloved Thessalonians that they are to be his hope and joy and crown of glorying

before our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming. He is to know them in that presence, and they are, as saved by his efforts, to be his eternal joy and crown of glory. Our Lord assures his friends, "I go to prepare a place for you, and I will receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." His prayer was, "I desire that where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory." The representation of the Scriptures is that the redeemed will form a special community or commonwealth in heaven. They are to be the church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, a general assembly, a great multitude out of every nation, heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ, a family sitting down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the saints. They are dwellers in prepared mansions. They are partakers of a common felicity. They will share in satisfying fellowship. They will be employed

in common, and blessed, and ceaseless service.

All this assumes and predicts the recognition of one another. The idea that death ends all acquaintance is utterly foreign to the Bible, as it is to reason and common sense. The saints will be like the angels; and as the angels recognize each other so will the redeemed.

Let us who are going on together to that world joyfully accept this truth; thankfully believe that in the world of light and blessedness it will be a constant joy to meet those who have been dearly loved on earth. The faithful teacher will rejoice at the testimony from one and another who have been helped by him into the kingdom. Families will be happy in their reunion. The sorrows of this world, which shrouded with melancholy memories the homes of those who were tenderly attached, which made the human path-

way so long and dark and lonesome, which poured their notes of grief into the happy music of life, will be forever over : while unmeasured ages of bliss shall prophecy eternal union and blessed companionship, into which shall come nevermore separation and sorrow and loneliness.

“ Will they meet us, cheer and greet us,
Those we've loved, who've gone before?
Shall we find them at the portals,
Find our beautiful immortals,
When we reach that radiant shore?

“ Hearts are broken for some token
That they live and love us yet !
And we ask, Can those who left us,
Of love's look and tone bereft us,
Though in heaven, can they forget?

“ And we often, as days soften
And comes out the evening star,
Looking westward, sit and wonder
Whether, when so far asunder,
They still think how dear they are !

“Past yon portals, our immortals,
Those who walk with Him in white,
Do they, 'mid their bliss, recall us?
Know they what events befall us?
Will our coming wake delight?

“They will meet us, cheer and greet us,
Those we've loved, who've gone before :
We shall find them at the portals,
Find our beautiful immortals,
When we reach that radiant shore !”

XI.

SUPERANGELIC LIFE.

SCATTERED along in the sacred writings are passages which indicate an exalted rank for the saints in the heavenly life; reminders to the church of its future glory; calls to Christians to live pure and noble and self-sacrificing lives.

The vanity and insignificance and brevity of this life are set forth as fitted to influence them on the one hand, and the perpetuity and pleasures and the everlasting honors of the life to come are brought out in strong relief on the other hand, as inducements to renounce the world and to aspire to things above.

The angels, as elder children of God, are represented as holding high places in the

heavenly world. They have been holy and loyal since their creation. They have stood faithful to the throne. Their pleasure has been to execute the will of their Creator. They have been swift to be his messengers. Their broad wings have swept through the skies in fearless fulfilment of duty. Their spears of light have flashed against every foe. Their stalwart forms have made the armies of heaven irresistible. They have loved God with a pure, warm love. All that he has done has won their admiration and their study. When the Son of God came to this world on his strange mission they watched what must have been to them the wonder of wonders : their songs burst forth over Bethlehem ; their plaints mingled with the sorrows of sad Gethsemane. When the greatest apostle asks the question, " Know ye not that we shall judge angels ? " he puts before us a strong affirmation of the superiority of re-

deemed men. He could hardly have expressed the truth more strikingly if he had wished Christians to understand that they are destined to an exalted rank in the Kingdom of the Lord. The sentiment agrees with much else in the Scriptures.

"The Lord's portion is his people," was an old way of stating it. Such phrases as "the perfection of beauty," "precious in my sight," "Israel my glory," "my jewels," and the like, foreshadowed in the old Scriptures those more tender and precious statements of the new Scriptures: "Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth;" "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him;" "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father;" "The glory that thou hast given me I have given them;" "Having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads;" "The first-born among many brethren;" "The spirits of just men made per-

fect;" "Kings and priests unto God," and such like.

When it is said that "we shall judge angels" we have something in the same vein, but concrete, striking, suggestive, bold. We know what their rank is, and if saints, the redeemed, are to outrank them, a peculiar and great honor is to be awarded them.

It cannot refer to *individual superiority*. The angels are of a stronger type than are men. They are a mighty race, they excel in strength, and they have been schooled in a long experience. In one night a single angel slew in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand men. The hand of an angel is a hand of might, whether stretched out to destroy the foe or to bear up the friends of God.

The angels have great intellectual attainment. They are wise in science, whether of the physical creation or of mind. They have

made the things of God a study under the best conditions. They are summoned to conference with God himself. Their school has been the universe; their teacher the great Creator. Not by one world have their studies been bounded; they have drawn lessons from all worlds.

The angels have also exalted moral perfection. They have not been lowered by apostasy. Their keen minds have not been tarnished by sin. They have not felt the hateful mastery of lust and envy and sordid passions. From strength to strength they have gone on in holy character. They are holy angels. They are dear to God. They are children of his power on whom he can look with complacency. They take a deep interest in all that interests God. They desire to look into the things of redemption. They thronged around Christ in invisible legions on all his earthly way and their

lives were ever at his service. Gladly would they have humiliated his enemies and have borne him back on their triumphant chariots to heaven.

And they are supremely happy. Their songs are full of joy. With unceasing gladness they behold the face of God continually. In these great natural and moral excellencies redeemed men cannot expect to emulate them. It will take time and experience and wide knowledge for the saints to stand where the angels now are. They are indeed to be made like unto the angels, but it will be as younger children are like elder ones who have had training and experience. Not in these respects can we judge angels. They have the start of all the saints in holy character, in intellectual strength, in exalted wisdom and bliss. When the Scriptures would speak of that which is great and excellent it is compared to the holy angels: profound wisdom

is the wisdom of the angels ; choicest food is the food of angels ; sturdiest strength is the might of angels ; splendid beauty is the beauty of these elder sons of God.

Redeemed men will rank the angels in the significant *contrasts* which their own experience will supply. The angels have had a uniform life of obedience and progress. Commencing in love and loyalty to God, their lives have kept right on in holiness and in the happiness and wisdom which holiness gives. Heaven has been their home always. They are used to its light and glory.

But *men* who come to that world come to it as immigrants from a far different world. Those who go from this world, dark with sin, hideous with appalling crimes—the scene of their own transgressions, of their repentance and confession, of their struggles and falls ; from this world where the *brightest feature is a cross*, the most precious

thing the blood of One who was slain for it, to that world, pure, full of light, with a glory that is faintly represented by the splendor of gems and the brilliance of noon, where there is nothing tarnished, with its throne of whiteness and its very pavement of glass and gold, with inhabitants white-robed, with music of which the sweetest we have heard is but dull foreshadow, with a life so grand that words fail to describe it, with occupations so noble that we have nothing to compare them with, with a presence so sweet that only paradise is typical of it, with God there in the mysterious revelation of himself, so august, so glorious, so loving, making heaven where he is, supremely happy, and filling with happiness all to whom he reveals himself—bear in their own experience such contrasts that no other beings can have the sensations which they will have nor know the peculiar joy and satisfaction from

their being there. There is a wonderful *escape* which no angel has ever known. Out of the peril of sin and out of the mutterings of wrath they have come. Out of sicknesses and pains and disappointments, out of trials for which there is no word, out of heart-breakings, out of the jaws of hell, they have had deliverance. And in heaven it *is* deliverance. The gates of heaven are holy. Whoever passes within them is safe. It is the City of Refuge for those whom Satan has scented and tracked. It is the City of Peace for those who have known long campaigns of war. It is the City of Holiness for those who have known the miseries and the despair of sin. Perhaps it can be told what heaven is to the angels; but it can never be told what it will be to the saints. The Bible tells what it is not. It deals in negatives. The affirmatives cannot be put in words. All that can be said is that "Eye hath *not* seen, nor

ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for him."

Angels cannot enter into the rapture which those will feel who have come out of this world, so dark, into that world of brightness. Having always lived there, and known no other state, they cannot prize it by reason of the ever-impressive contrasts which will repeat themselves to the saints.

The one fact, that sin is past, and the warfare which sin produces, will give an exuberance of delight and a bounding sense of relief. The saints will walk forth as freed slaves. Every power will have new liberty.

Then, there will be the *reunions* and the restorations of the saved. Old friends will rush into each other's arms there. Parents who were separated from their children will regain them. Up from the conflict of sin will come the scarred heroes; they will meet

their old comrades and their old commanders; the whole old history will start out into clear memory; great praise will swell out from the restored ranks. Why, in this world, fellow-soldiers who have shared the burdens and the sanguinary struggles and the glories of hard campaigns fall on each other's necks, and weep tears of joy, at the reunions of armies. We cannot imagine the delight and transport of eternal restorations. The mother will fold the child in her loving embrace—perhaps a lost boy regained by her prayers in the love of Christ. The teacher will renew acquaintance with the scholar who was carried in her solicitude and intercession. Brothers and sisters, old friends of every degree, will have fellowship again. The angels will stand back in deference to these demonstrations and to all that is so peculiar in the *contrasts* of those who have known the woe of sin and the forgiveness and joy and satis-

faction of redemption. Redeemed men will rank the angels by their *nearness to the Redeemer*. The symbolic revelation which God makes of himself, as the Lamb slain in the midst of the throne, shows us that Redemption is the chief work of God; and also that he wishes to be known as One sacrificing himself to save his creation. God puts less value on power than he puts on love. God ranks almightiness lower than he ranks helpfulness. God would prefer to redeem a world rather than to create a world.

The throne expresses the idea of sovereignty. But the throne of heaven in its central idea keeps ever prominent the fact that he who holds it is a Saviour. The greatest thought of the universe, then, is that sinners of this world are saved by the Maker of the universe. They stand nearest to him. They are the most to him and they render the most to him. They most glorify him be-

cause they are witnesses to the success and the blessedness of Redemption. Angels have never been redeemed. They can be grateful for the joy they have always had, but they cannot be grateful for being lifted out of the ignominy of sin and for being delivered from the peril of hell. They can praise their Creator with sincerity; but they cannot know the thrill of rescue from perdition. They can exalt great perfections of their King; but they cannot testify to his greatest attribute.

There is a striking passage in the fourteenth chapter of Revelation where a new song sung before the throne is spoken of, and it is said that no one could learn that song but those who were redeemed from the earth. There are many songs there; old songs that have rung out since the creations began, songs rich with the rhythm and melody of celestial music, songs that have celebrated great works of God and magnificent adorn-

ment of his Kingdom, old songs that have set his glories high and in which all the angels have worshipped him. But this *new* song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain: for thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation," is a song which only the saved can sing. Full of tenderness and pathos, thrilling in every note with the joy and rapture of escape and of freedom, it falls in subdued cadence on the air of heaven; and every angel stands still to listen, entranced, while those who bear the image of the Lamb celebrate his cross and his blood, by which heaven was opened to them.

They were closely united to him in this world, while they bore his name and trusted in him and gained victory through him. He has always been supremely dear to his followers. They have clung to him in life and in death.

He is to be their Brother always: King of angels, but Brother and King of saints. These will stand nearest to him. They will love most because they have been forgiven most. They are related to Christ by divine blood, and are sons of God; and He will dwell among them. They will stand before all angels, and all the universe, a blood-bought and an innumerable company, the grateful witnesses of what has been accomplished by the greatest work of God. And as honors come to Christ, testimonials and tributes and trophies from all worlds, in acknowledgment of his great self-sacrifice which set the brightest gem in his imperial crown, the saints will give supreme evidence and emphasis to the greatness of the work.

They who are followers of Christ now are to contribute something, as it may be, to the dignity and greatness of the future life. Shall they for this congratulate themselves before-

hand? Or, rather, shall they be admonished to walk worthy of their calling: to bear in mind what they are destined unto, to maintain the dignity and self-respect of sons of God, to permit the anticipation of coming honors to chasten their sentiments and to refine their characters and to give a glow to their faces and their songs, and to cause that the life which is now rapidly passing shall be a constant preparation for a life that is to be superangelic?

XII.

*THE REVELATION OF GOD BY THE
REDEEMED TO OTHER WORLDS.*

THE Church has a great work, as a witnessing body, in this world. It has a commission to set forth great truths, great foundation principles, great revelations of God, great and mighty issues, so that observing men may be rightly impressed, so that, as far as possible, the populations may be won to righteousness, so that Christ's work, the greatest work of God, which most signalizes his administration and most manifests his character, may be made effective. And this is vastly important. It cannot be over-rated.

It has also another testimony to give : out-

side of this world, in other spheres of knowledge and influence, among beings of different order and different experience, when it has passed out of the range of time into the realm of immortality.

The affairs that do most concern us are affairs of intense interest to other beings, in other worlds. We have repeated statements in the Scriptures of the attention which the angels give to the matter of our redemption. From the inception of Christ's work till its close they followed every step of it with the absorbing anxiety of those who were in full sympathy with him and who wanted to understand that which was so full of wonder for them. And since he has gone up to his throne again they have been ministering spirits for them who shall be heirs of salvation. The whole history of redemption, running through the ages, involving the revolutions of nations, the changes in the

world's progress, the biographies of individuals, and eventuating in the greatest glory that can come to the throne of God, is the subject of their constant study and of their growing admiration. And this which so concerns them will equally affect the inhabitants of other estates of God's vast dominion. The greatest theme of their thought is God himself; and that which throws light on him, which illustrates his attributes and his character, is that which they will be the most eager to look into.

Each world that God has made has its own evidence to give to him. Something new in design or degree will be offered by each one. The burning sun of our system, the central furnace of heat and the glowing focus of light for the worlds that revolve around it, has something grand to offer. Saturn, eleven hundred times larger than our earth, encircled by two illuminated rings five

thousand miles apart, which light every night with a peculiar glory, has other, but not inferior, evidence to give. On every orb the Creator has stored the volumes of his wisdom for the study of his creatures.

This world is small in bulk, its rank is low, among the divine creations. But it has more to offer in illustration of God than many another world of larger size and blazing with a greater glory. Granted that other worlds are grander, of more wonderful structure, of richer materials; that they have a higher order of inhabitants, a vaster learning, a more finished science, greater beauty on their landscapes, greater variety in their productions, greater satisfaction in their history: still there is probably no other world that has such a contribution to give to all worlds as our own globe. Its bulk is small but its testimony is immense. Its history is brief but what wonders have been enacted on it!

That which has here been done is, in the Scriptural terms, a revelation of "the manifold wisdom of God." The redemption by the Lord Jesus Christ is not only the greatest of all divine works but it is that in which the most varied wisdom is evinced. Undoubtedly there is sublime wisdom in the work of creation with all its manifold developments and adjustments, so that these countless orbs move in harmony, so that the economy of each one is adapted to its peculiar conditions. Life here is a very different thing from life on Mercury or on Jupiter. But this wisdom is wisdom in the construction of mechanism: the other is wisdom in the control of mind, and in the control of mind to save it. A great problem was thrust on the divine solution by the fact of human sinfulness. Left to itself, to work out its natural results, the only issue would be death. The race would lie in ruin, its possibilities spoiled,

its creation worse than a failure. That, God could not suffer. The divine wisdom must disclose some method by which the calamity should be arrested and the divine honor should be upheld. To us it seems a simple thing ; it is the " old, old, story " with which we are all familiar, our very familiarity with it reducing its greatness. But only divine wisdom, profoundly exercised, could secure such sublime ends by such simple means. The plan is the admiration of angels and the wonder of worlds. Who could have thought of such a plan : of the self-sacrifice of the Son of God for sinners, in the humiliation and death of Christ for sinners, in the agencies of the cross and of the Spirit's power and of divine truth and divine providence, in successive dispensations through the growing history of the world, by which the kingdom of God is advanced and made victorious ?

We do not know what may be going on in the history of the planet that flames on the eastern sky in our early evenings, or on the fixed star that sentries the outposts of the visible creation. But we believe that nothing so great can be involved in their history as that which is getting solution under our eyes in the conversion and sanctification of redeemed souls and the conquests of Christ's kingdom. Nothing there can attract angelic thought like the transactions here. Nothing there can demonstrate the divine wisdom like this history which we ourselves are living and which is to be written out to its immortal issues. There is nothing else like the salvation of souls from eternal shame to eternal glory. And to achieve this is the crowning work of divine wisdom. Heaven contributed from its throne to secure it. Heaven, throughout all its intelligences, is watching eagerly and absorbingly the ongoing of the supernatural

dispensation. St. Paul calls it the *manifold* wisdom of God. To those who look at it from other spheres it is greatly diversified, as the glories of the sunset vary in the changing pomp and splendor of lighted clouds. Each age, each step of progress, each new advance of the kingdom, reveals its own peculiar glory.

Now, this glorious wisdom of God is of interest to principalities and powers in heavenly worlds. They are of superior order; and because they are wise and holy, because they look on God as he is and estimate sin and holiness aright, their profound attention has been attracted to the strange facts which are transpiring on this world. St. Paul, in one place, enumerates them as angels, principalities, powers: also, all principality and power and might and dominion; and in another place, as thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers.

St. Peter speaks of angels and authorities and powers. These terms characterize exalted spiritual beings in heavenly worlds. How many there are, from how many worlds they are looking to this world for light, we cannot know. Their shining forms have been here. They congregated around Bethlehem when their King lay in its lowly manger. They filled the mountains with their praises when they announced to the shepherds his advent. They ministered to him in the weakness that followed his fast and his temptation. They strengthened him in the agony of Gethsemane. They watched as sentinels at his tomb. They are ministering spirits now to all the children of God. From beginning to end this whole economy of the redemption of the world is of tenderest and intensest interest to them.

They have their own worlds to think of; they can see the glories of their Creator in

the magnificence and beauty which surround their habitations ; but there has been the ongoing of a work in this world to which nothing else can be compared and which has arrested their attention. The thought of the universe has been concentrated on the miracle of this world. A new revelation of God has been made here ; the revelation of him as a merciful Saviour, undertaking in person to save sinners, undertaking by personal exile and humiliation and pain to do it. And the princes and powers and dominions of other worlds have sought to understand it. The knowledge of our redemption is not confined to the limits of this little planet. It has gone abroad. It is the theme of conversation and the subject of study far and wide. This world is small, but the transaction on it is great. No other world has witnessed the like. As a great political or military or scientific event will fix

the eye of the world and the thought of all nations upon it for the time, so the humiliation and the sacrifice of the Son of God have challenged and fixed the attention of heavenly worlds.

One aspect of heaven is found in this: that the full knowledge of the redemptive work is to be *made known by the redeemed* in other worlds. Some knowledge of it has gone forth. It is the theme of thought and of talk already, far and wide, among the creations of God. So far it is not altogether understood. There are desires to look into it. It is yet an unfinished work. But its history is progressing. From age to age, through manifold revolutions, through overthrows and strange up-buildings, it is to go on. We shall not see the end of it, nor will our children. But, in the future which no human eye can scan, this monumental history of redemption is to stand before the gaze of the worlds. The voice that

on Calvary said, "It is finished," will again pronounce the full undertaking *finished*.

Then that which has been achieved by it is to be made known by the redeemed themselves. The Church is to be the instructress of principalities and powers and dominions in the heavenly spheres. After having testified here, by holy living, by martyr deaths, by song and prayer and Christian character, it is to testify more widely by personal witness to what Christ has achieved for his saints. The accumulations of personal experience now are to swell that volume of testimony which will be published abroad to the worlds. Our witness, so far as we are faithful to our Lord, will go into that mass of evidence. We shall belong to the "great cloud of witnesses." The question to be answered will be this: "What did the Lord of Glory accomplish when he left his throne and humbled himself to the rank of humanity and to the shame

of the cross?" His redeemed Church will give the answer. Adam will say, Noah will reply, Abraham will repeat the facts of his experience, Moses will tell of the wonders which he knew, David and Isaiah and the holy prophets will publish that which inspired their songs and their predictions, St. John will tell of his love for One who first loved him, St. Peter will tell how he was found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Martyrs will tell what joy they had in giving their lives for One who gave his precious life for them; and all the multitude among whom they will be, whose sins were washed away and whose life was bought by the blood of the Lamb, will repeat what they have known in their individual experience. Every trial through which Christians have been safely brought will swell the testimony to the work of Christ. Every victory which they have gained by his might

over sin, over temptation, over sorrow, over opposition, will be recounted to his glory. All will want to tell what Christ has done for them. The speechless saints on this side will gain their voices over there. The timid disciples will get courage in the light of the throne. They who hold back now will be volunteering then. Having tasted the bliss of heaven they will want to honor him who gained it for them. Would to God that they could anticipate it enough to be open-mouthed disciples now!

Think what the Church will offer to the worlds! Think what sacredness this world will get because the cross of Christ stands upon it! Delegations may come to it from far-off worlds, as wise men from old lands in the east and shepherds from the mountains came to Bethlehem. One inquiry will be foremost among all great, thoughtful minds throughout the skies, and the redeemed

Church will answer it. The answer, we may be assured, will be satisfactory. This redemption of our Lord is no uncertain experiment. Some of us, alas! may not have part in it. But our rejection cannot dim its glory. Principalities and dominions will have their wonder satisfied.

There have been great histories of men renowned, of peoples who have marched on the roads of greatness and power and have left the marks of their genius and sovereignty on all the world. But there has been and there can be no other history like the fulfilled history of redemption. It will be the history of a world saved by the self-sacrifice of God. The lost out of its populations will be forgotten in the glories of the saved, in the number of them and in the testimony of them.

So it is that the Church is a communion which rises far above the limits of time and

the histories of humanity into the reaches of eternity. It is a commission charged with the treasures of divine operations and the revelations of divine glory not merely terrestrial but cosmical. The Christian church is the bond which links earth and the heavenly spheres.

To some of us who read it may be given to carry to them the knowledge which the worlds are waiting for. Heaven is not a place of luxurious ease and perpetual praise, but it is the center of services from which the redeemed go forth to carry knowledge and to enable principalities and powers to understand the story of Christ, which is the history of God, inasmuch as it includes the fullest and divinest revelation of what he is.

May we be fitted for the blessed service!

XIII.

THE MAKING OF HEAVEN.

THREE things, it is truly said, make Heaven : to be where Christ is ; to be with him there ; to behold his glory there. Christ's desire that all those who truly love and serve him shall have this heavenly experience makes it certain for them, for he has power to give eternal life to as many as the Father has given him. It is the reward of his sacrifice that his real followers shall dwell in his palaces. His desire is his royal purpose, expressed in the terms of mediatorial intercession, but carrying authority with it ; the authority of a king in his own right and the authority of privilege under the covenant of redemption.

The saved in heaven bear a peculiar relation to their Redeemer. Not only is his love very great for them, but they are both witnesses and trophies of his greatest work. How numerous they may be, compared with those loyal angels who from of old have stood before the throne and have been his ministers in the vast and varied affairs of his administration, we cannot now determine. But they will form a great company. They will add vastly to the population of heaven. The human colony in the heavenly metropolis will eventually become innumerable. It is great now, counting back through the thousands of years during which the emigrants have worn so many pathways from the earth to the skies. But this is only its beginning. The race is only in its infancy: the conquests of Christ have only begun. From the feeble minority the believers in Christ may become the overwhelming majority of the

world's population; and by and by, for long durations of time, the whole race, multitudinous and loyal, will contribute its successive generations to that augmented colony. And every one who arrives there will carry his personal testimony, as he will be a personal trophy, to the wonderful salvation which he has himself received through the work of Christ. Possibly we put but little honor on this work now. Many scornfully reject it. Many affect a haughty indifference to it. Many hold it lightly as compared with study or business or ambitious aims. Even those who think they prize it only half apprehend it and live far below its sublime claims. But when, far on, Christ shall become satisfied and heaven shall be full of the victorious saints, when the innumerable kings and priests of those royal abodes shall bring their revenues of love and their offerings of gratitude to him, and when their voices shall be

like mighty thunderings and the sound of many waters breaking on all the ocean shores, there will be no half-hearted loyalty toward the Redeemer. Those who are fortunate enough to be there to see it will find that the redemptive work of Christ is the foremost theme of heaven and the eternal wonder of all its inhabitants.

Christ is a person and has a personal presence. He came down from heaven: he ascended to heaven. He says, "In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you. I will receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." We are not to think of the omnipresent Christ as diffused throughout space. We are not to think of heaven as anywhere, but as a definite place, as a realm with distinct boundaries, as a veritable city of God. The Bible has not located it for us. Science may not be able to do so. Science may define a

central place among the stars, around which worlds and systems of worlds harmoniously revolve, as though *there* might be the metropolis of the universe, around which the constellations keep their reverential march and to which all material orbs send their tributes of obedience, as States send their representatives to the capital and outlying provinces contribute to the central authority. But it is somewhere, beyond the scope of human vision but within the scope of divine thought; where God is in His essential glory, where Christ sits on his throne, where he went from the earth when a cloud received and hid him from the disciples' sight, where the old patriarchs sit down together, where the pious dead live on, and from which, in dying, sweet visions and voices come from the saints. It is where our friends who have fallen asleep went when they left us, and now are; where we shall go when a few more trials shall have

been endured and a little more labor shall have been wrought on the world. It is where the triumphant church will rest when its battles shall have been fought, the capital in which they will be welcomed and crowned. There Christ dwells. There his empty throne waited, when for thirty-three years he was solving the problem of redemption on this globe. To it he was received back with a welcome such as no other great conqueror ever had. And it is heaven *because He is there*. That is the making of it. He is its exceeding glory. A great honor came to him for his manifestation of GOD in the humiliation, and shame, and suffering and sacrifice of his redemptive work. To be where he is a great honor. To be where worthy kings and princes are, where the princes and kings of thought and humanity dwell, gives dignity and pleasure to life. The choice places are made so by the presence of

the beloved and renowned. Even when they have gone their memory sanctifies the hallowed spots. Here, we say, they, the holy and the trusted, who had all our hearts could give, lived, and thought, and suffered; here they walked and left their footsteps; here the air vibrated with the tones of their sweet voices; here they looked on sky and landscape, and therefore it is holy ground. Heaven is holy and precious because it is where Christ is.

In this world Christ is with his friends. He promises that where even two or three are met in his name he will be with them; that where his servants go forth to bear his gospel into all the world he will be with them unto the end. He is with them in the ordinances of his house, taking delight in their united worship and sending the Spirit to give light and comfort; in the reading and teaching of his word through which they are

sanctified; in the observance of the Lord's Supper, where, in symbol, they receive his body and his blood. So intimately is he with them in the Supper that some Christians have taught that the simple emblems become his real body and blood, sacred to the touch and taste; an error which springs from too literal interpretation of his words.

In the heavenly world his friends are to be with him. It is not enough to be where he is: those who do not love him might be where he is. Many were where he was who had no part with him, who bitterly rejected him. Only those who love him can really be *with him*. A blind man, it is said in illustration, may be where the light is, but he is not with the light; it gives him no comfort, no joy, no guidance, no sight of objects of beauty and worth.

I was once at beautiful Ischl, in the amphitheater of the Tyrolean Alps, and walk-

ing along its highways strolled into the choice grounds of a villa, where the velvety turf and the rich parterres and all the environs indicated an ownership of wealth and luxury, when a soldier respectfully beckoned me away. He was a guard before the summer residence of the Emperor of Austria, who, with his family, was within those sacred walls. I was where they were, in Ischl, under the same fair skies, within the same panorama of grand mountains which engirdled us like a wall lifted to the sky, breathing the same saline air of that imperial sanitarium. But I was an alien and a stranger, and the dwellers spoke in a tongue that was unknown to me, and I could not enter within the charmed circle of that divinity that hedges round a king.

His followers will be with Christ as his friends and companions, honored, trusted, beloved. This implies intimate union and

communion. They shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads: and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people. This is the crowning of the Christian's life. Christ will not be satisfied till all who have believed in him are with him where he is. He must have all who are his with him. Only that is the making of heaven.

He will be with them in their battles and trials; he will go with them into every hard conflict, into every difficult work, into every sore suffering. They shall know that a divine Hand is leading them on, that an eye which never sleeps is watchful of them. But when the trial is over, when the crash and roar of battle have died away, they shall be with him, in the royal abode itself, near the throne, themselves enthroned, dwelling forever in confidence and co-heirship with him! It is not enough that they shall be where he is; they must be with him there.

Death is but a door-keeper. He flings back on its silver hinges the doors of a Paradise which is the inheritance of the saints. They walk in, with no sentinel to bar their passage or to beckon them away, where their Lord, their Redeemer, dwells. That will be their Home forever. Of what our Lord desired for those who were given to him of the Father, Luther said, "We should let this utterance be our soul's pillow and bed of down, and with joyful heart resort thereunto when the sweet hour of rest is at hand." It should be more. It should be our inspiration in the whole mortal experience. It should make life one perpetual home-stretch. It should make trivial all gains, all honors, all ambitions that are only worldly. It should lift over the seas on which we sail the light-houses and the towers of a better country. It should illumine the end of our pilgrimage with a light that

streams up the skies brighter than any aurora.

The future, final *glory of Christ* is something which we cannot yet understand: it is the making of heaven. We know what glory is here. Men like it; they strive for it; they sacrifice everything else for it. But the glory which Christ is to have is another thing. It is grounded in goodness: it is lighted with love. He had glory with the Father before the world was, as he tells us. That was his glory as Almighty, as Creator, as the Perfect One. But we learn that there is another, different, exceeding glory, which is to come to him in the commemoration of his redemptive work. The drift of the Bible is to one end—the final triumph of Christ. Sometimes it looks to us as though his work were vain, as though it were too expensive for the results, as when a great campaign ends in disaster. But this is a limited, tempo-

rary view: it takes in one epoch, it includes only one chapter. This work is a whole volume: it embraces all epochs, it is to end in victory. By and by Christ is to come again; there will be the Second Advent. But he will come, not as Mediator, but as Judge. He will sit on his throne, and before him will be gathered all nations. The judgment of the world will be rendered. Then Christ will reign. The last voice in history will be a voice of triumph. When the last word shall be written, and the volume of Time shall be closed forever, that last word shall be *Christ regnant*. Everything sweeps irresistibly to that. The world's great overthrows are preparing the way for that. No Nero can stop it. No Buddha can stand in its way. No infidel blasphemer can put it back. No diplomacy can change the determined result. No combinations can arrest the supreme will of the Almighty. Over

thrones and those who sit on them, over philosophies and sciences and affairs, over great paganisms and greater civilizations, the cause and kingdom of our Lord move resistlessly to their issue. When the judgment of the world shall come it will be found that there has been no mistake, except on the part of those who have opposed or rejected Christ. He shall reign.

We cannot picture the scene of the triumph in heaven. There have been great triumphs here, when capitals have opened their gates to victorious armies and the populations have joined in the splendid festivities. They are but the faint mimic of the heavenly reality. When Christ and all the innumerable host who have been saved by him from all the nations, in all the ages, shall unite in the final triumph it will be the consummate glory. To see it is to partake of it. They who behold it will be sharers in it.

“The glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them.” Strange as it may be, strange as all this work of our redemption is throughout, Christ will share all the glory of it with those whom he saves. Of small moment may we hold this world. Lightly may we esteem all that we enjoy and all that we suffer. “For the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed to us-ward.” That glory, then, is to be revealed to us. In the wonder of that revelation will be the felicity and the making of heaven. Christ will not be satisfied, his strong desire will not be fulfilled, till those who are with him where he is shall behold his glory, which is to follow and crown and forever celebrate his redemption of mankind.

Are we all to be there?

Are we to be with Christ?

Are our eyes to behold his glory?

XIV.

A DOOR OPENED IN HEAVEN.

HAVE we not wondered what heaven is; what is visible and prominent there; what are the occupations of those who dwell there; what is the service and what is the life in that world of glory; what is the revelation to those who are permitted to enter it?

To the last of the prophets there was given the vision of that which we would all like to see. Before his sight a Door was opened in heaven and the wonders of the place were revealed in solemn and significant symbolism. They were revealed for the instruction and the impression of God's children on the earth throughout the Christian

ages; to draw us toward that world and into fitness for its transcendent scenes and service.

The first thing that met the gaze of the seer was a *Throne* set in heaven. That was the first commanding object, central, radiant, imposing. It stood for regality, for supreme sovereignty. It was the throne of heaven's King. From that went control, rulership, command of the universe. Changes there might be—creation of new worlds; destruction of old worlds—but that royal seat would stand, unchanged, unchallenged.

And there was One sitting upon the throne. That was GOD. No description is given of him. No human language could describe him. He cannot be defined nor set forth in any terms that we can use. No human eye could look upon him; no pencil could delineate him. He is the infinite One: beyond our thought; beyond any expression

by word or by art. There was ONE on the throne: nameless, infinite, incomprehensible, glorious; a Being of Almighty power, of transcendent wisdom. The appearance of him who sat on the throne was like the luminousness and color of a jasper stone and a sardius: the jasper transparent and varied in color, the sardius red like blood; both suggesting the scarlet-purple robes of royalty: suggesting them, but defining and describing nothing that we can fix upon or form an image of; suggesting majesty and might, imperial authority and power. So much the apostle saw, but he "saw no similitude." Hidden in glory unapproachable, shrouded by light too dazzling for mortal sight, was He who sat in ineffable splendor upon that mystic throne!

And there was a *rainbow* round about the throne, like an emerald to look upon. That image of peace and mercy, in which

the predominating tint was green, arched the throne and symbolized the order and calm and moral beauty which the monarch would evoke when the storm and turbulence of passionate natures should pass away, as on the retreating forces of tempests which have raged in din and havoc the "colors of the showery arch" are painted on the background of a cloud. It set forth the veracity of God, who hung the bow in the cloud as the sign of his perpetual covenant that never again should the earth be destroyed by overwhelming waters. It emblemized the grace which antagonizes sin and makes it possible for a world to be redeemed from the stormy violences and passions of a universal revolt. The bow arched the throne as in benediction upon it.

Round about the throne were *four and twenty thrones*; and upon the thrones four and twenty elders sitting, arrayed in white

garments; and on their heads crowns of gold. These were the representative kings and priests unto God, representatives of the old dispensation and of the new dispensation, the two departments of the one church of God, in one of which were the twelve tribes of Israel and in the other the twelve apostles of our Lord. Each elder sat upon a brilliant throne, crowned with a crown of gold. They have a kingly character. They represent the exaltation of saints. It would seem that no glory is too great to be bestowed upon men who are redeemed. They are joint-heirs with Christ. They sit on thrones. This is not for their sake: it is for the sake of their Redeemer. They are honored that so they may honor him. His redemptive work was the admiration of heaven. It absorbed the attention of all peopled worlds. The angels desired to look into these things. For it Christ must receive su-

perlative glory. Heaven could not do too much for him. His return to his vacant throne was a triumph. His continued life in heaven must be crowded with new glories. So those who come up from his redeemed world are welcomed, for his sake, to seats of kingship, and they reign with him. Their ascription, as voicing the universal church, all saved souls, is "Thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests." They represent the triumphant church. They are crowned and throned. Weary was the warfare of the militant church. Century after century, in conflict with the forces of sin and Satan the followers of Christ urged their scanty conquests until sometimes it seemed as though they would never succeed, reverses following victories, whole bodies apostatizing, and

darker, denser night succeeding the day! Peoples blessed with privilege, enjoying the light of noon, rejected the offers of the gospel, satisfied with their state and life of sin. But this could not last forever. Immanuel must be victor. The world must become loyal. The apostate state must be followed by long ages of peace and glory in which Christ would be supreme. So these crowned and enthroned elders represent the victorious church. They bring the tributes of a ransomed world to the central throne and surround it with their united adoration.

And out of the throne proceed *lightnings, and voices, and thunders*. These represent power, and majesty, and supremacy.

And there were seven *lamps of fire* burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. When the Holy Spirit came down on the day of Pentecost in the sound as of a rushing mighty wind, tongues like as of

fire, parting asunder, sat on the head of each apostle. The ever-burning lamps of fire represent the seven-fold, or perfect, dispensation of the Spirit. His influence flames on amid disturbing voices, amid the tumult of human passion, the loud clamor of sin and the cries and thunders of apostasy. He is in the world a force of calmness and control. Convulsions are abroad. Nations are hurled against nations in the shock and thunder of war. Great empires rise and fall, and great is the fall of them. With infinite tranquillity the Spirit, as of old, moves on the face of the waters and brings order out of chaos. He is present in all places, amid all disturbances, with light that beams steadily to lighten the people, with flames of fire to consume all opposition, with a divine influence that is pervasive and corrective and saving.

And before the throne, as it were a glassy sea, like unto crystal; and in the midst of the

throne, and round about the throne, were four *living creatures* full of eyes before and behind. And the four living creatures, having each of them six wings, are full of eyes round about and within. These living beings supported the throne; it rested upon them, as upon power, intelligence, vigilance, energy, which these represent. The divine government is a government of power: nothing can stand against it; it is supreme in this world; in all worlds. It is a government of intelligence. All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. It is a government of vigilance: observant of every part, of every subject, of every condition, of all results. It is a government of tireless energy. It moves forward to the full execution of its plans with the relentlessness of fate and the force of omnipotence.

And as these living beings were full of

eyes before and behind, round about and within, so is the divine providence all-observing and ever-watchful, from which nothing can be concealed and nothing escape. This government is of One who is omniscient. The vast interests of a world, of all the worlds, of our race, of the beings unnumbered and unknown by us, are all carefully, wisely, unremittingly administered by Him who rules with impartial hand.

And they have *no rest* day and night, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come." The representatives of the divine government, in creation, in providence, in grace, continually, without rest, bring their greatness to Him who sitteth on the throne. Whatever men may do, whatever revolting angels may do, all that the Creator does, whether in the production of worlds and beings by His imperial will, or in the wide

and wise supervision of them, or in the merciful plans which he devises for their welfare, is full of material for His glory.

And when the living creatures shall give glory and honor and thanks to Him that sitteth on the throne, to Him that liveth forever and ever, the four and twenty elders shall fall down before Him that sitteth on the throne and shall worship Him that liveth forever and ever, and shall cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created." With the *unceasing ascriptions* of those who represent God's works and ways are united, in joyful offerings of loyalty and love, the praises of the whole church of God. The redeemed out of every nation, conscious of what has been done for them, cannot do too much for God. Exalted

to the glories of the blessed world, they rejoice in all the manifestations of divine power and prerogative, they see in all the revolutions that are changing the aspects of the world the fulfillment of holy purposes, and so they fall down in unceasing adoration before the throne; they offer their devout worship to Him who holds all power in his hands and who reigns eternally; they cast down their crowns of gold before the throne, and they say with united voices, "Thou art worthy, our Lord and our God, in thy perfect character, in thy sublime attributes, in thy glorious sway, to receive all that thy church can bring of reverence and service to thee: for all things exist by thy will, and for thee they are."

Such, when the door opened in heaven, were the scenes of that exalted world: the throne of God and One who sat upon it veiled in the glory that surrounds him, the

rainbow that over-arches it, lightnings and thunderings playing and reverberating around it, lamps of fire ever blazing before it, and worshippers representing the vast creations and the blessed kingdom of grace offering their perpetual homage and praise to the Eternal Creator and Lord of all!

Brought into this sublime presence, standing by the entrance of this opened door in heaven, we may be assured that the kingdom is one.

Those who have gone on before us, we who are pressing hard after, the revered of other days, the blessed whose warm hand-clasp has only just now been loosed from ours, those who are near us in the struggle and discipline of life, are all members of the same commonwealth, heirs of the same heritage, destined to the same blessed fellowship. By and by, and not long will it be, we shall be united forever.

“They sing the Lamb in hymns above,
And we in hymns below.
Thee in thy glorious realm they praise,
And bow before thy throne ;
We in the kingdom of thy grace :
The kingdoms are but one.”

These glimpses of glories, of which words make but a faint and unsatisfactory expression, are designed as a *test* and as an *attraction*. As we look into the opened door, as we see the glory and hear the worship, we can decide on our relation to it. If we are of the heavenly mind we shall look in as children look forward to their home-coming, as travelers anticipate the sight and welcome of native land. Many are the Christians who, like St. Paul, have had the desire to depart; have longed for the time to come when, freed from sin and the temptations of the world, they should be confirmed in holiness and have their whole being in harmony with the service and songs of the heavenly state.

If we are of the worldly mind, if our pleasure is in a life of alienation from God, such scenes as are introduced to us in the Apocalypse are repellent; we have no affinity for them, they find no answering responses in our souls. So the vision becomes a test. It is a test of character.

That opened door may be regarded as a door of entrance also. And there is but one way in which it can be entered: Christ is the Door here, and whoever enters this door will enter that door. Through him may be granted at last an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of heaven.

This apocalyptic insight and foresight is designed as an attraction also. It appeals to the renewed soul, to all who are of the heavenly mind. God gives us the sight into our home to draw us to it. Pictures and rose-colored descriptions entice men to new and desirable lands; and from over the sea, from

other lands, they set sail for them. No business, no pleasures, no companions, can detain them. There is no satisfaction for them till their feet tread the novel soil and their eyes look upon the sun-lit skies, and their senses are regaled with the songs and fragrance of the attractive landscape. So God sets the door open in heaven that we may be won to its pleasures and pursuits. He gives us the glimpse of the glorious throne and the suggestion of himself, the splendor of a world of clear light and unceasing service and happy residents, that we may set out for it and press onward to it, unhindered by any worldly joys or friendships; that our ears may ever be filled with the charm and rapture of a far-away music, and our souls be stirred and spurred by the cheer and welcome of its loving and joyous inhabitants.

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